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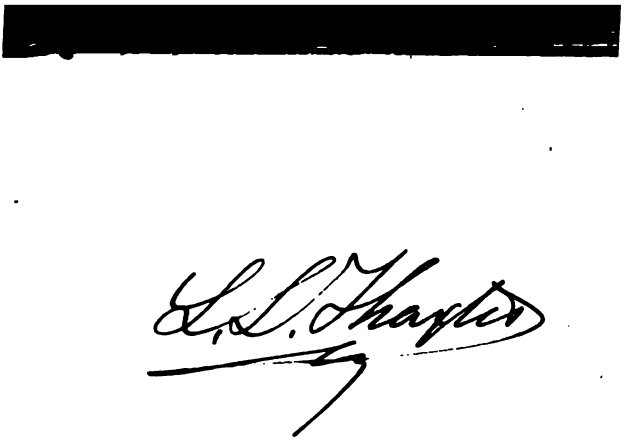

SHAKSPEARE'S SONNETS.

LONDON
PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO
NEW-STREET SQUARE

SHAKSPEARE'S SONNETS

NEVER BEFORE INTERPRETED:

HIS PRIVATE FRIENDS IDENTIFIED:

TOGETHER WITH

A Recovered Likeness of Himself.

BY

GERALD MASSEY.

'With THIS key Shakspeare unlocked his heart.'

LONDON:
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
1866.

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BY

GERALD MASSEY.

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THE SONNETS:

NOTICES AND COMMENTS.

'As the soule of *Euphorbus* was thought to live in *Pythagoras*: so the sweete wittie soule of *Ovid* lives in mellifluous & hony-tongued *Shakespeare*, witnes his *Venus* and *Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, his sugred Sonnets among his private friends.' Thus wrote Francis Meres, Master of Arts of both Universities, in his work entitled 'Palladis Tamia, Wits Treasury, being the Second Part of Wits Commonwealth,' published in the year 1598.

This is the earliest notice we have of Shakspeare's Sonnets, and it supplies us with an important starting-point. From the information given by Meres, we learn that in the year 1598, the sonnets of Shakspeare were sufficiently known and sufficiently numerous to warrant public recognition on the part of a writer, who is remarkable for his compressed brevity; well known enough in certain circles for the critic to class them with Shakspeare's published poems. That the sonnets spoken of by Meres are to a large extent those which have come down to us, cannot be doubted, save, in desperation, by the supporters of an unsound theory. Thus, according to Francis Meres, in 1598, Shakspeare had made the 'private friends' for whom he was composing his sonnets, and if the sonnets be the same, the private friendship publicly

recognised, must include that which is so warmly celebrated in the earliest numbers.

Further, the title to Thorpe's Collection, printed in 1609, reads with an echo to the words of Meres—'Shakspeare's Sonnets, never before Imprinted,'[1] though so often spoken of, and so long known to exist in MS.

An understanding on the subject is implied in the familiarity of phrase. The inscriber appears to say, 'You have heard a great deal about the "Sugred Sonnets," mentioned by the critic, as circulating amongst the poet's private friends; I have the honour to set them forth for the public.'

The sonnets were published in 1609,[2] with this inscription:—

TO . THE . ONLIE . BEGETTER . OF .
THESE . INSVING . SONNETS .
Mr . W . H . ALL . HAPPINESSE .
AND . THAT . ETERNITIE .
PROMISED .
BY .
OVR . EVER-LIVING . POET .
WISHETH .
THE . WELL-WISHING .
ADVENTVRER . IN .
SETTING .
FORTH . T. T.

The book is inscribed by Thomas Thorpe, a well-known publisher of the time, who was himself a dabbler in

[1] Hence the title to the present work.

[2] According to the following technical account, 'SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS. Neuer before Imprinted. At London by *G. Eld* for *T. T.* and are to be solde by William Aspley. 1609.' 4°. *Collation.* Title, one leaf; Inscription, one leaf; the Sonnets, etc. B to K in fours, and L 2 leaves=40 leaves. In some copies, for *William Aspley* we have *Iohn Wright*, dwelling at Christchurch gate. 1609. The sonnets commence on B 1 *recto* and end on K 1 *recto*, with FINIS. Then comes, without any advertisement, *A Louers complaint by William Shake-speare.* It extends from K 1 *verso* to L 2 *verso*, with a second FINIS. The sonnets are numbered 1—154, but have neither *addresses* nor any indication of the *subjects*. The *Louers complaint* is a poem in 47 seven-line stanzas.

literature. He edited a posthumous work of Marlowe's, and was the publisher of plays, by Marston, Jonson, Chapman, and others. Shakspeare makes no sign of assent to the publication; whereas he prefaced his 'Venus and Adonis' with dedication and motto; the 'Lucrece' with dedication and argument.

We shall see and say more of Thorpe and his Inscription, by-and-by; for the time being I am only giving a brief account of the sonnets, and the opinions respecting them, up to the present day. After they were printed by Thorpe in 1609, we hear no more of them for thirty-one years. In 1640 appeared a new edition, with an arrangement totally different from the original one. This was published as 'Poems written by Wil. Shakspeare, Gent. Printed at London by Tho. Cotes, and are to be sold by John Benson.' In this arrangement, we find many of the pieces printed in the 'Passionate Pilgrim,' mixed up with the sonnets, and the whole of them have titles which are chiefly given to little groups. Sonnets 18, 19, 43, 56, 75, 76, 96, 126, are missing from the second edition. This publication of the sonnets as poems on distinct subjects shows, to some extent, how they were looked upon by the readers of the time. The arranger, in supplying his titles, would be following a feeling and answering a want. Any personal application of them was very far from his thoughts. Sonnets 88, 89, 90, and 91, are entitled 'A Request to his Scornful Love.' 109 and 110, are called 'A Lover's excuse for his long Absence.' Sonnet 122, 'Upon the Receipt of a Table Book from his Mistress;' and 125, 'An Entreaty for her Acceptance.' The greater part of the titles however are general, and only attempt to characterise the sentiment.

In the editions that followed the two first, sometimes the one order prevailed, sometimes the other. Lintot's, published in 1709, adhered to the arrangement of

Thorpe's Collection. Curll's, in 1710, follows that of Cotes. Gildon gave it as his opinion, that the sonnets were all of them written in praise of Shakspeare's mistress. Dr. Sewell edited them in 1728, and he tells us, by way of illustrating Gildon's idea, that 'a young Muse *must* have a Mistress to play off the beginnings of fancy; nothing being so apt to elevate the soul to a pitch of poetry, as the passion of love.' This opinion, that the sonnets were addressed to a mistress, appears to have obtained, until disputed by Steevens and Malone. In 1780, the last-named critic published his 'Supplement to the Edition of Shakspeare's Plays,' (1778) and the notes to the sonnets include his own conjectures and conclusions, together with those of Dr. Farmer, Tyrwhitt, and Steevens. These four generally concur in the belief that 128 of the sonnets are addressed to a man; the remaining 28 to a lady. Malone considered the sonnets to be those spoken of by Meres. Dr. Farmer thought that William Harte, Shakspeare's nephew, might be the person addressed under the initials 'W. H.' However, the Stratford Register soon put a stop to William Harte's candidature, for it showed that he was not baptised until August 28, 1600. Tyrwhitt was struck with the peculiar lettering of a line in the 20th sonnet,—

A man in *Hew* all *Hews* in his controlling,

and fancied that the poet had written it on the colorable pretext of hinting at the 'only begetter's' name, which the critic conjectured might be William Hughes.

The sonnets were Steevens' pet abhorrence. At first he did not reprint them. He says, 'We have not reprinted the sonnets, &c. of Shakspeare because the strongest Act of Parliament that could be framed would fail to compel readers into their service, notwithstanding these miscellaneous poems have derived every possible advantage from the literature and judgment of their only intelligent

editor, Mr. Malone, whose implements of criticism, like the ivory rake and golden spade in Prudentius, are, on this occasion, disgraced by the objects of their culture. Had Shakspeare produced no other works than these, his name would have reached us with as little celebrity as time has conferred on that of Thomas Watson, an older and much more elegant sonnetteer.' Afterwards he broke out continually in abuse of them. The eruption of his ill humour occurs in foot-notes, and disfigures the pages of Malone's edition of Shakspeare's poems. He held that they were composed in the 'highest strain of affectation, pedantry, circumlocution, and nonsense.' 'Such laboured perplexities of language,' he says, 'and such studied deformities of style prevail throughout these sonnets, that the reader (after our best endeavours at explanation!) will frequently find reason to exclaim with Imogen—

> I see before me, man, nor here, nor there,
> Nor what ensues, but have a fog in them
> That I cannot look through.'

'This purblind and obscure stuff,' he calls their poetry. And in a note to sonnet 54 he asks with a sneer, 'but what has truth or nature to do with sonnets?' Here he has taken the poet to task for his bad botany. Shakspeare has written—

> The canker-blooms have full as deep a dye
> As the perfumed tincture of the roses.

Steevens remarks that Shakspeare had 'not yet begun to observe the productions of nature with accuracy, or his eyes would have convinced him that the cynorhodon is by no means of as deep a colour as the rose!' What rose? The poet does not say a damask rose, nor a rose of any red. The pink hedge rose may be of as deep a dye as the maiden-blush, and other garden roses. The

comparison in colour is only relative, the remark on that side merely general, it is the fragrance of the rose in which the positive part of the comparison will be found. The meaning is this; the hedge-roses may be of as deep a dye or lovely a colour as their garden fellows in hue, but even then they are not so precious in perfume, and are not used for the purpose of distilling. Shakspeare knew a dog-rose from the damask-rose;[1] no flower more familiar to him in his rambles along the Warwickshire lanes. He has carried into his illustrations drawn from it all the aversion which children have to the 'cankers' that infect this wayside flower.[2] But Steevens had no patience with these poems; he wrote some sad stuff about the sonnets, and scoffed at them in the most profane and graceless way. He never read them, never penetrated to the depths of feeling that underlie the sparkling surface. The conceits, that play of fancy, which is a sort of more serious wit, came on him too suddenly with their surprises. He was too slow for them, and they fooled him and laughed in his face. And when he did catch the sense of the (to him) nonsense, he took his revenge by decrying the impertinent jingle of sense and sound that had so playfully tried to tickle his obtuse spirit, and only succeeded in making him savage. Wordsworth, in his essay supplementary to the celebrated

[1] I had rather be a *canker* in a hedge.
Than a *rose* in his grace.—*Much Ado about Nothing.*

[2] This recalls another peevish and petulant remark of Steevens, in making which, he snapped too soon for his limited amount of perception. Shakspeare, in the 'Passionate Pilgrim,' number 10, writes—

'As faded gloss no rubbing will refresh.'

Steevens catches at this, and replies: 'Every one knows that the gloss or polish on *all works of art may be restored*, and that *rubbing is* the means of restoring it.' Indeed! Did the critic ever test his theory on an old hat? It would not be advisable even to try it in burnishing the faded gilding of picture-frames and mirrors. Shakspeare used 'gloss' in the sense of gilding.

preface, printed with the Lyrical Ballads, has administered a just rebuke to Steevens, and reprehended his flippant impertinence. He says, 'There is extant a small volume of miscellaneous poems, in which Shakspeare expresses his own feelings in his own person. It is not difficult to conceive that the editor, George Steevens, should have been insensible to the beauties of one portion of that volume, the sonnets; though in no part of the writings of this poet is found in an equal compass a greater number of exquisite feelings felicitously expressed. But from a regard to the critic's own credit he would not have ventured to talk of an Act of Parliament not being strong enough to compel the perusal of these little pieces, if he had not known that the people of England were ignorant of the treasures contained in them; and if he had not, moreover, shared the too common propensity of human nature to exult over a supposed fall into the mire of a genius whom he had been compelled to regard with admiration, as an inmate of the celestial regions, 'there sitting where he durst not soar.'

This was written by Wordsworth in 1815; he had read the sonnets for their poetry, independently of their object, and had thus got a little nearer to the spirit of Shakspeare, behind its veil of mystery, and attained to a truer appreciation of his sonnets. About the same time Coleridge lectured on Shakspeare at the Royal Institution, and publicly rebuked the obtuse sense and shallow expressions of Steevens.

In 1797 Chalmers had endeavoured to show that the sonnets were addressed to Queen Elizabeth, although Her Majesty must have been close upon sixty years of age when the sonnets were first commenced. He argues that Shakspeare, knowing the voracity of Elizabeth for praise, thought he would fool her to the top of her bent; aware of her patience when listening to panegyric, he determined, with the resolution of his own Dogberry, to

bestow his whole tediousness upon her. It may be mentioned by way of explanation that this preposterous suggestion was hazarded in support of a very desperate case—the Ireland forgeries. Coleridge also held, though on a far sounder basis, that the person addressed by Shakspeare was a woman. He fancied the 20th sonnet might have been introduced as a blind. He felt that in so many of the sonnets the spirit was essentially feminine whatever the outward figure might be, sufficiently so to warrant our thinking that where the address is to a man it was only a disguise; for, whilst the expression would indicate one sex, the feeling altogether belied it, and secretly wooed or worshipped the other. Poet-like, he perceived that there were such fragrant gusts of passion in them, such 'subtle-shining secresies' of meaning in their darkness, as only a woman could have called forth; and so many of the sonnets have the suggestive sweetness of the lover's whispered words, the ecstatic sparkle of a lover's eyes, the tender, ineffable touch of a lover's hands, that in them it must be a man speaking to a woman. Mr. Knight believes that such sonnets as 56, 57, and 58, and also the perfect love-poem contained in sonnets 97, 98, and 99 were addressed to a female, because the comparisons are so clearly, so exquisitely the symbol of womanly beauty, so exclusively the poetic representatives of feminine graces in the world of flowers, and because, in the sonnets where Shakspeare directly addresses his male friend, it is manly beauty which he extols. He says nothing to lead us to think that he would seek to compliment his friend on the delicate whiteness of his hand, the surpassing sweetness of his breath. Mr. Knight has found the perplexities of the personal theory so insurmountable, that he has not followed in the steps of those who have jauntily overleaped the difficulties that meet us everywhere, and which ought, until fairly conquered, to have surrounded and protected the poet's personal

character as with a *chevaux-de-frise*. He has wisely hesitated rather than rashly joined in making a wanton charge of immorality and egregious folly against Shakspeare. He likewise thinks it impossible that William Herbert, afterwards Earl of Pembroke, could have been the 'only begetter' of the sonnets. Seeing the difficulties of the subject in all their density, he makes an attempt to cut a way through, at least for himself, but the success is not equal to the labour.

Boswell, second son of Dr. Johnson's biographer, in editing a later edition of the work in which Steevens' notes are printed, had the good sense to defend the sonnets against that censor's bitterness of contempt, and the good taste to perceive that they are all a-glow with the 'orient hues' of Shakspeare's youthful imagination. He ventures to assert that Steevens has not 'made a convert of a single reader who had any pretensions to poetical taste in the course of forty years,' which had then gone by since the splenetic critic first described the sonnets as worthless. Boswell also remarks anent the personal interpretation that the fondling expressions which perpetually occur would have been better suited to a 'cockered silken wanton' than to 'one of the most gallant noblemen that adorned the chivalrous age in which he lived.'

Dr. Drake, in his 'Shakspeare and his Times' (1817), was the first to conjecture that Henry Wriothesley Earl of Southampton, was the friend of Shakspeare who was addressed so affectionately in the sonnets, as well as inscribed to so lovingly in the dedications to his poems. He thought the unity of feeling in both identified the same person, and maintained that a little attention to the language of the times in which Thorpe's inscription was written, would lead us to infer that Mr. W. H. had sufficient influence to 'obtain the manuscript from the poet, and that he lodged it in Thorpe's hands for the purpose

of publication, a favour which the bookseller returned by wishing him *all happiness and that eternity* which had been promised by the bard in such glowing colours to another, namely, to one of the immediate subjects of his sonnets.' Drake contended that as a number of the sonnets were most certainly addressed to a female, it must be evident that 'W. H.' could not be the 'only begetter' of them in the sense which is primarily suggested. He therefore agreed with Chalmers and Boswell that Mr. W. H. was the *obtainer* of the sonnets for Thorpe, and he remarks that the dedication was read in that light by some of the earlier editors. Having fixed on Southampton as the subject of the first 126 sonnets, Drake is at a loss to prove it. He never goes deep enough, and only snatches a waif or two of evidence floating on the surface. When he comes to the latter sonnets he expresses the most entire conviction that they were never directed to a *real* object. 'Credulity itself, we think, cannot suppose otherwise, and at the same time, believe that the poet was privy to their publication.'

About the year 1818 Mr. Bright was the first to conceive the idea that the 'Mr. W. H.' of Thorpe's inscription was William Herbert, afterwards Earl of Pembroke. It is said he laboured for many years in collecting evidence, brooded over his cherished idea secretly, talked of it publicly, and was then anticipated in announcing it by Mr. Boaden in 1832. Poor Mr. Bright! He was not in time, but I think he will rejoice in eternity that he escaped the infamy of persistently trying to tarnish the character of Shakspeare for the sake of a pet theory; that is, if *his* discovery included the personal interpretation. Mr. Boaden argued shallowly that the Earl of Southampton could not be the man addressed by Shakspeare, and assumed desperately that William Herbert was! He held him to be the 'only begetter.'

These modern discoveries reached their climax in

'Shakspeare's Autobiographical Poems, being his sonnets clearly developed, with his character drawn chiefly from his works by Charles Armitage Brown' (1838.) Mr. Brown adopts the hypothesis of Mr. Bright, that Mr. W. H. is the Earl of Pembroke; he also accepts the suggestion first made by Coleridge,[1] that the sonnets are not sonnets proper, but a series of poems in the sonnet stanza; these he divides as follows:—

First Poem. Stanzas 1 to 26.—To his friend, persuading him to marry.

Second Poem. Stanzas 27 to 55.—To his friend, who had robbed the poet of his mistress, forgiving him.

Third Poem. Stanzas 56 to 71. To his friend, complaining of his coldness, and warning him of life's decay.

Fourth Poem. Stanzas 78 to 101.—To his friend, complaining that he prefers another poet's praises, and reproving him for faults that may injure his character.

Fifth Poem. Stanzas 102 to 126.—To his friend, excusing himself for having been some time silent and disclaiming the charge of inconstancy.

Sixth Poem. Stanzas 127 to 152. To his mistress, on her infidelity.

The two last sonnets he leaves out, and would also reject the 145th stanza on account of its measure, and the 146th because of its solemn nature; and he considers the sonnets containing the puns on the name of 'Will' to be quite out of keeping with the rest, on account of their playful character. Without adducing one atom of proof, Mr. Brown is much satisfied in assuming that Shakspeare was a self-debaser and self-defamer of a species that has no previous type—no after-copy.

Mr. Hunter thinks the discovery made by Mr. Bright settles the whole matter. He considers the claims of the Earl of Southampton as 'too improbable to deserve examination, and the sooner they are dismissed from

[1] *Table Talk*, p. 231.

the public recollection, the better for the reputation of those who proposed them.'[1]

Mr. Hallam inclines to the personal theory of the sonnets, and evidently thinks we may safely conclude that William Herbert was the youth of high rank as well as personal beauty and accomplishment and licentious life, whom Shakspeare so often addressed as his dear friend. He remarks that, 'There is a weakness and folly in all excessive and misplaced affection, which is not redeemed by the touches of nobler sentiments that abound in this long series of sonnets.' 'No one,' he says, 'ever entered more fully than Shakspeare into the character of this species of poetry, which admits of no expletive imagery—no merely ornamental line.' But, so strange, so powerful is the poet's humiliation in addressing this youth as 'a being before whose feet he crouched, whose frown he feared, whose injuries—and those of the most insulting kind—the seduction of the mistress to whom we have alluded, he felt and bewailed without resenting;' that on the whole, 'it is impossible not to wish the sonnets of Shakspeare had never been written.'

Mr. Dyce, in 1864, rests in the conclusions which he had reached thirty years before. 'For my own part, repeated perusals of the sonnets have well nigh convinced me that most of them were composed in an assumed character, on different subjects, and at different times, for the amusement—if not at the suggestion—of the author's intimate associates (hence described by Meres as "his sugred sonnets among his private friends"); and though I would not deny that one or two of them reflect his genuine feelings, I contend that allusions scattered through the whole series are not to be hastily referred to the personal circumstances of Shakspeare.'

Mrs. Jameson has suggested, not only that Southampton

[1] *Illustrations of Shakspeare*, vol. i. pp. 236–7.

was the male friend addressed by Shakspeare, but that some of the sonnets may have been written for the Earl to send to Elizabeth Vernon, who afterwards became Countess of Southampton.[1]

Mr. Bolton Corney, in a pamphlet printed for private circulation, has recorded his conviction that the Earl of Southampton was the 'Begetter' of the sonnets; that they were written in fulfilment of a promise made to the earl in 1594; that the sonnets mentioned by Meres in 1598 formed the work which was promised in 1594 and reached the press in 1609, but that they are, with slight exceptions, mere poetical exercises. He protests against the theory that they relate to transactions between the poet and his patron:—1. Because as an abstract question the promise to write a poem cannot imply *any such object.* 2. Because in the instance of '*Lucrece*' no such object could have been designed. 3. Because, in the absence of evidence, it is incredible that the man of whom *divers of worship had reported his uprightness of dealing* should have lavished so much wit in order to proclaim the grievous errors of his patron—and of himself. He denounces the vaunted discovery of Mr. Brown as an unjustifiable theory, a mischievous fallacy. He accepts M. Chasles' reading of Mr. Thorpe's inscription, and thinks a Frenchman has solved the Shakspeare problem which has resisted all the efforts of our 'homely wits.' Believing that the Earl of Southampton was really the 'only begetter' of the sonnets, and that the inscription addresses the 'only begetter' as the objective creator of them, Mr. Corney feels compelled to accept M. Chasles' interpretation; he thinks that William Herbert dedicates the sonnets to the Earl of Southampton, and that Thorpe merely adds his wishes for the success of the publication. He assumes that the initials 'W. H.' denote William Lord

[1] I was not aware of this fact when my article on 'Shakspeare and his Sonnets' appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, April, 1864.

Herbert, afterwards Earl of Pembroke; but he follows the discoverer of this undoubted fact, Mr. Bright, no further. As to the way in which the sonnets reached the press, Mr. Corney submits a new theory. 'Be it assumed that the volume of sonnets was a transcript made by order of William Herbert; that it was then inscribed by him to the Earl of Southampton as a gift-book, and that it afterwards came into the possession of the publisher in a manner which required concealment. With this theory, which the inscription and other peculiarities of the volume seem to justify, the perplexities of the question vanish. I anticipate *one* objection. As copies of the sonnets were in the hands of the private *friends* of the poet, a copy was surely in the hands of his patron. How then could 'W. H.' offer the earl so superfluous a gift? It might have been a substitute for a lost copy, or a revised text, or a specimen of penmanship, as it was a common enough thing for specimens of the caligraphic art to be offered as gift-books.' Thus, he holds that the sense of the inscription is:—To the only begetter (the Earl of Southampton) of these ensuing sonnets, Mr. W. H. (William Herbert) wishes all happiness, and that eternity promised (to him) by our ever-living poet. This was the private inscription, in imitation of the lapidary style, written on the private copy which had been executed for the purpose of presenting to the Earl; and Thorpe, in making the sonnets public, let this dedication stand, merely adding that the 'well-wishing adventurer in setting forth' was 'T. T.'

There have been various minor and incidental notices of the sonnets, which show that the tendency in our time is to look on them as autobiographic. Mr. Henry Taylor, in his 'Notes from Books,' speaks of those sonnets in which Shakspeare 'reproaches Fortune and himself, in a strain, which shows how painfully conscious he was that he had lived unworthily of his doubly immortal spirit.'

Mr. Masson[1] states resolutely, that the sonnets are, and can possibly be, nothing else than a record of the Poet's own feelings and experience during a certain period of his London life; that they are distinctly, intensely, painfully autobiographic. He thinks they express our poet in his most intimate and private relations to man and nature as having been 'William the Melancholy,' rather than 'William the Calm,' or 'William the Cheerful.'

The sonnets seem to have placed Ulrici in that difficult position which the Americans describe as 'facing North by South.' To him the fact that Shakspeare passed his life in so modest a way and left so little report, is evidence of the calmness with which the majestic stream of his mental development flowed on, and of the clear pure atmosphere which breathed about his soul. Yet, we may see in the sonnets many traces of the painful struggles it cost him to maintain his moral empire. His mind was a fountain of free fresh energy, yet the sonnets show how he fell into the deeps of painful despondency, and felt utterly wretched. They tell us that he had a calm consciousness of his own greatness, and also that he held fame and applause to be empty, mean, and worthless. This is Ulrici's *cross-eyed* view. He reads the sonnets as personal confessions, and he concludes that Shakspeare must have been so sincere a Christian, that being also a mortal man, and open to temptation, he, having fallen and risen up a conqueror over himself, to prove that he is not ashamed of anything, set the matter forth as a warning to the world, and offered himself up as a sacrifice for the good of others, most especially for the behoof of the young Earl of Pembroke, for, according to Ulrici he alone can be the person addressed.

Gervinus, in his Commentaries on Shakspeare, holds

[1] *Essays, chiefly on English Poets.*

that the sonnets were not originally intended for publication, and that 126 of them are addressed to a friend; the last 28 bespeaking a relation with some light-minded woman. It is quite clear to him that they are addressed to one and the same youth, as even the last 28, from their purport, relate to the one connection between Shakspeare and his young friend, and with his fellow-countryman, Regis, who translated the sonnets into German, Gervinus considers that these should properly be arranged with sonnets 40—42. He maintains that the real name of the 'only begetter' was not designated by the publisher, the initials W. H. were only meant to mislead. That this 'Begetter' is the same man whom the 38th sonnet calls in a similar sense the 'Tenth Muse,' and whom the 78th sonnet enjoins to be 'most proud' of the poet's works, because their influence is his, and born of him. He does not believe that the Earl of Pembroke could be the person addressed, the age of the earl and the period at which the sonnets were written, making it an impossibility. He thinks the Earl of Southampton is the person, he being early a patron of the drama, and a nobleman so much looked up to by the poets and writers of the time, that they vied with each other in dedicating their works to him. Gervinus is of opinion that a portion of sonnet 53 directly alludes to the poems which the poet had inscribed to the earl, and that he points out how much his friend's English beauty transcends that old Greek beauty of person, which the poet had attempted to describe, and set forth newly attired in his 'Venus and Adonis.' This foreign critic wonders why in England the identity of the object of these sonnets with the Earl of Southampton should have been so much opposed. To him it is simply incomprehensible, for, if ever a supposition bordered on certainty, he holds it to be this.

A strenuous endeavour *not* to read the sonnets has recently been made by a German, named Bernstorff, and it is out of sight more successful than any attempt yet made to read them. It is so immeasurably far-reaching, so unfathomably profound, that we may call it perfectly successful. This author has discovered that the sonnets are a vast Allegory, in which Shakspeare has masked his own face; he has here kept a diary of his inner self, not in a plain autobiographic way, but by addressing and playing a kind of bo-peep with his *doppleganger*. For the sonnets do not speak to beings of flesh and blood, no Earls of Southampton or Pembroke, no Queen Elizabeth or Elizabeth Vernon, no corporeal being, in short, no body whatever, but Shakspeare's own soul or his genius or his art.

It is Shakspeare who in the 1st sonnet is the 'only herald to the blooming spring' of modern literature, and the world's fresh ornament. The 'beast that bears' the speaker in sonnet 51 is the poet's animal nature. The 'sweet roses that do not fade' in sonnet 54 are his dramas. The praises so often repeated are but the poet's enthusiasm for his inner self. All this is proved by the dedication, which inscribes the sonnets to their 'only begetter,' W. H.—*William Himself*. The critic has freed the Shakspearian Psyche from her sonnet film, and finds that she has shaken off every particle of the concrete to soar on beautiful wings, with all her inborn loveliness unfolded, into the empyrean of pure abstraction! There sits the poet sublimely 'pinnacled, dim in the intense inane,' at the highest altitude of self-consciousness, singing his song of self-worship; contemplating the heights, and depths, and proportions of the great vast of himself, and as he looks over centuries on centuries of years he sees and prophesies that the time will yet come when the world will gaze on his genius with as much awe as he feels for it now. 'Is this vanity and self-conceit?'

the critic asks, and he answers, 'Not a whit, simple truthful self-perception!' Into this region has he followed Shakspeare, where 'human mortals' could not possibly breathe. He keeps up pretty well, self-inflated, for some time, but at length, before the flight is quite finished, our critic gives one gasp, showing that he is mortal after all, and down he drops dead-beaten in the middle of the latter sonnets.

The mind of Shakspeare is a vast ocean teeming with life, and his works, critically considered, afford an oceanic space and range for every sort of creature and mental species that come to sport or make sport in this great deep. Also, the sonnets have caused much perplexity and bewilderment, as is sufficiently reflected in the present account, but of all the strange things that have taken advantage of the largeness and the liberty, this author is surely the oddest. His theory is a creation worthy of Shakspeare's own humour, sincere past all perception of foolishness. What we require is the secret cue to his profundity, at which we can but dimly guess. It may be that he has explored the Shakspearian ocean so determinedly and dived so desperately, that he has found the very place where, as is popularly supposed of the sea, there is no bottom, and he has gone right through headlong!

OF THE

PERSONAL THEORY

AS INTERPRETED BY

CHARLES ARMITAGE BROWN.

Now this ill-wresting world is grown so bad,
Mad slanderers by mad ears believed be.—*Sonnet* 140.

THERE has never yet been any genuine, honest attempt to grapple with, and truly interpret, the sonnets. A theory has sprung up in the mind of a reader here and there, and straightway all the effort and the energy have been devoted to the theory; the sonnets being left to shift for themselves. There has been no prolonged endeavour to grasp the reality. No one has yet wrought at the sonnets with the amorous diligence and sharpened insight and painful patience of an Owen at his work; sought out the scattered and embedded bones of fact, and put them together again and again, until they should fit with such nicety that the departed spirit which once breathed and had its being in these remains, should stir with the breath of life, and clothe itself in flesh once more, and take its original shape. There has been nothing done, except a little surface work. Thorpe's Inscription has afforded a delightful bone of contention, most savoury and satisfactory to the

critical wranglers who love to worry each other most over the point that is of least importance, and who, when they have even got a good bone, will eagerly drop the reality, like the fabulist's dog, and spend all their might in trying to grasp its shadow. Give them such a question for debate as this: 'Did Shakspeare call Cleopatra a gipsy because she was an Egyptian?' or was an Elizabethan necessarily a cripple because he spoke of being 'lamed by Fortune?' and there will forthwith be a vast display of learned folly; the most shallow device will serve to show their deepest profundity. So that the subject of all Shakspearian subjects, being of such vital interest and so personal to the poet of whom the world is anxious to hear the least whisper of authentic fact, has been left almost untouched, and there is no opposition theory to take five minutes' labour in demolishing; no opponent worthy of steel; no antagonist that calls forth the respectful sword-salute. The most considerable attempt hitherto made—that of Messrs. Boaden and Brown—is about equal in value to the work of those painters, whose art consists solely in the knack they have of disguising all the difficulties of a subject, not of their skill in conquering them. In dealing with the sonnets they both adopted a policy old as that of the hunted ostrich.

And yet it is of great importance to have this question of the sonnets settled. We must be ignorant hypocrites to continue talking as we do on the subject of our great poet's character, and believe what we do of his virtues and moral qualities, if these sonnets are personal confessions. And if they be not, then all lovers of Shakspeare will be glad to get rid of the uncomfortable suspicions, see the 'skeleton' taken to pieces, and have the ghost of the poet's guilt laid at once and for ever; so that wise heads need no longer be shaken at '*those* sonnets,' and fools may not wag the finger with comforting reflections upon the littleness of great men. The poet's bio-

graphy cannot be satisfactorily built, with this shifting sand of the sonnets at the foundations.

To illustrate and enforce his theory of the sonnets, Mr. Brown has appended a prose version of their contents. And it is interesting to compare the two; for, in order to make ends meet, he has been compelled to slur over or leave out all the most important matters; all the literalities and italicised meanings of the poetry. These did not concern him, apparently, because not necessary to his theory. Nor does he appear to have suspected that, whilst marching forward in such easy triumph to his conclusions, he was leaving in his rear many a masked battery, any one of which would be able to sweep his forces from the field. He could not have seen the drift of what he was leaving out, or he would surely have attempted to paraphrase it in some specious way.

His reading is rendered utterly worthless, and the theory is invalidated, by the suppressed evidence. He has not noticed that the youth addressed is *fatherless*, and that in consequence of this the roof of his house is going to decay, and the poet urges him to marry on purpose to repair this roof, and uphold his house by 'husbandry in honour.' He has left out the personal allusion to the poet's 'pupil' pen, and the promise to 'show his head' in public print, when he had written something that should worthily prove his great respect, and enable him to 'boast,' as he afterwards did in his dedications, how much he loved the earl. All these things have been overlooked and omitted, because they are opposed to the Herbert theory in every particular. Then the tender history of lost friends, who were so near and dear, and whose love was of the most sacred kind, with all the special revelation of sonnets 30, 31, is passed over. Mr. Brown dare not touch it. Yet these precious friends who are buried were most intimately related to the speaker; the memory of them moves him intensely, and the music

grows grave and slow with the burden of feeling, the weight of gathered tears; it sounds like a dead-march heard in the distance. If these losses had been Shakspeare's, such facts should have had some interpretation. Mr. Brown thus summarises the two sonnets:

30. When I grieve at past misfortunes, the thinking of you restores my losses and ends my sorrows.

31. All those friends whom I have supposed dead, lie hidden in you. All that they had of me is yours, and I view their beloved images in you.

A theory which requires this sort of support must be in a perilous way! Again, in the Sonnets on Absence, Mr. Brown does not suspect that there are and must be two speakers: one who is a traveller abroad on a distant shore, at 'limits far remote,' and who speaks most of these sonnets when he is from home and away from his love; whilst the other, in sonnet 39, speaks of the absence of this speaker, and says what a torment his absence would be, but that the 'sour leisure gives sweet leave' to write about him, and make one person twain by 'praising him here who doth hence remain.' Thus, we have the writer who speaks at home, and another person who speaks abroad from over sea.

Again, this is Mr. Brown's rendering of sonnet 70:

The slander of others shall not harm you. On the contrary, while you remain good, it will but prove your worth the more. Your having long escaped censure is no security for the future; and your power in the world might be too great, were you believed faultless.

Which reading has not the least likeness to what Shakspeare wrote. This sonnet is one of the most valuable of the whole series. The anchorage of personality in it is assured. And it gives the lie point-blank to the supposition that the earl had robbed the poet of his mistress. If this had been so, he could not have been

the 'Victor, being charged.' And as Shakspeare is able to congratulate the earl in this way, that fully disproves Mr. Brown's reading of the story; something had occurred; the earl had been blamed for his conduct; slander had been at work. Shakspeare takes part with his friend, and says, the blame of others is not necessarily a defect in him. The mark of slander has always been 'the fair,' just as the cankers love the sweetest buds. Suspicion attaches to beauty, and sets it off;—it is the black crow flying against the sweet blue heaven. It is in the natural order of things, that one in the position of the earl and having his gifts and graces, should be slandered. But, 'so thou be good,' he says, 'Slander only proves thy worth the greater, *being wooed of Time.*' What does that mean? but that the earl has met with opposition in his love; has had to *wait* for its full fruition; and Slander, in talking of him without warrant, will but serve to call attention to his patient suffering and heroic bearing under this trial and tyranny of Time. So Shakspeare *did* think the earl was slandered, and he accounts for it on grounds the most natural.

He then offers his testimony as to character—

> And thou present'st a pure unstained prime!
> Thou hast past by the ambush of young days,
> Either not assailed, or victor being charged.

A singular thing to say, if Mr. Brown's version of the earlier sonnets were true. Very singular, and so Mr. Brown has omitted it! Further, the sonnet is a striking illustration of the mutual relationship of poet and peer—a most remarkable thing that Shakspeare should congratulate the earl for his Joseph-like conduct, and call him a 'victor.' Very few young noblemen of the time, we think, would have considered that a victory, or cared to have had it celebrated. Yet this fact, which Shakspeare says is to the earl's praise, will not be sufficient to tie up

Envy, which is always on the loose, seeking for some reputation to devour.

This, again, is Mr. Brown's rendering of the world of meaning to be found in sonnet 107—

> No consideration can controul my true friendship. In spite of death itself, I shall live in this verse, and it shall be your enduring monument.

Now let the reader turn to the sonnet thus paraphrased. The historic circumstances and all the most precious particulars are lost with such a theory, the believers in which are blind to the jewelly sparkle that indicates the *lode* of the meaning in certain lines, rich in hidden treasure. So of sonnet 124; at Mr. Brown's touch the spirit passes out of it, the history of the time fades away, the dates grow dim, Shakspeare's meaning is dead, and Mr. Brown wraps it in a winding-sheet of witless words. In his account of sonnet 117, he takes no notice of four lines, which of themselves are sufficient to differentiate the characters and lives of Shakspeare and Southampton—

> That I have *frequent been with unknown minds,*
> And *given to Time your own dear-purchased right;*
> That I have *hoisted sail to all the winds*
> *That should transport me farthest from your sight.*

Here was matter of great 'pith and moment,' but Mr. Brown knew not what to make of it. In sonnet 36, Mr. Brown professes to find this:—'Perhaps I must not openly acknowledge you, lest the resentment I showed, which I bitterly lament, should be remembered to your shame!' And he conjectures—harping on his favourite string—that the poet's resentment had been made public. Shakspeare wrote nothing of the sort. The speaker in that sonnet is the guilty person, whatsoever the guilt may be; his are the blots; so guilty is he, that for the other to take notice of him publicly, will be to court dishonour.

'My bewailed guilt,' is the guilt which I do bewail—am sorry for—not which I did bewail and give expression to in public.

Boaden, who is here followed by Gervinus, was driven to think that in this 36th sonnet, the poet must lament the difference of rank that existed betwixt them, and was fearful lest politic reasons might pull them apart. But this will not do any way. It is sufficient answer to know that this difference in rank had been no barrier to their intercourse; and if the patron had made no obstacle of the disparity in station, it would be a gratuitous insult for Shakspeare to set it up as one. Nor could he, after the secure self-congratulation on this very point in sonnet 25, have spoken of the difference of rank as the separating spite of Fortune; for he had expressly sung of the friendship as a gift beyond all the prizes of Fortune. Nor could the poet's lot in life be his 'bewailed guilt.' Also, the 'blots' are altogether of a personal character. And if the poet had done something so bad as is here implied, he would not have the right to say *on behalf of both*, that there was still *but one respect*, and the love *on both sides* yet remained the same. The sonnet cannot be read by such a theory.

Then Mr. Brown has altogether ignored the discrepancies betwixt what is recorded of Shakspeare's personal character by those who knew him and what has been surmised of it by some who have read but never understood the sonnets. Nor has he hesitated to charge the greatest dramatic poet that ever lived with the grossest violation of dramatic proprieties poet ever made. He has assumed that Shakspeare was capable of mixing truth and falsehood in the wildest, most wanton way—as though he were a mountebank whose face was like one of those elastic playthings for children that may be squeezed or stretched into any shape, on purpose to mock us with a myriad transformations of appearances. Here

are a few expressions thus assumed, without question, to have been addressed to a man by the most natural of all poets:

I tell the day to please him, thou art bright,
And dost him grace when clouds do blot the heaven;
So flatter I the swart-complexioned night.
Sonnet 28.

Lascivious Grace, in whom all ill well shows,
Kill me with spites; yet, we must not be foes.
Sonnet 40.

Being your slave, what should I do but tend
Upon the hours and times of *your desire*?
I have no precious time at all to spend,
Nor services to do, till you require:
Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour,
Whilst I, *my Sovereign*, watch the clock for you,
Nor think the bitterness of absence sour,
When you have bid *your Servant* once adieu.
Sonnet 57.

Now proud as an enjoyer, and anon
Doubting the *filching age* will *steal* his treasure.
Sonnet 75.

And prove thee *virtuous* though thou art *forsworn*.
Sonnet 88.

But what's so blessed fair that fears no blot?
Thou *may'st be false*, and yet I *know it not*.
Sonnet 92.

How like *Eve's apple* doth thy beauty grow,
If thy *sweet virtue* answer not thy show.—*Sonnet* 93.

As on the finger of a *throned Queen*
The basest Jewel will be well esteemed,
So are those errors that in thee are seen,
To truths translated. *Sonnet* 96.

For nothing this wide universe I call,
Save thou, *my Rose*! in it thou art my all.
Sonnet 109.

Mine appetite I never more will grind
On newer proof to try an older friend.—*Sonnet* 110.

Such Cherubins as your sweet self.—*Sonnet* 114.

For why should others' false adulterate eyes
Give salutation to my sportive blood?—*Sonnet* 121.

Thus, it is assumed that Shakspeare, the peerless Psychologist, the poet whose observance of natural law was infallible, whose writings contain the ultimate of all that is natural in poetry, should have sinned grossly against nature, in a matter so primal as the illustration of sex!

Lastly, Mr. Brown remarks of the rival poet in sonnet 86, 'who this rival poet was is beyond my conjecture; nor does it matter!' But it matters much; for if this poet should prove to be Marlowe, that one fact alone would be of sufficient force to deal the death-blow to the vaunted theory that William Herbert was the 'only begetter' of Shakspeare's sonnets; because Marlowe died in the year 1593, when Herbert was exactly thirteen years and four months of age. And finally, the upholders of this Herbert Hypothesis have, in their helpless desperation, been driven to assert that the well-known 'sugred sonnets' of Shakspeare, spoken of so pointedly by Meres, as among the poet's 'private friends,' in the year 1598, *must have been lost*! The theory did indeed require to be supported with an audacity that would stick at nothing; but what a 'lame and impotent conclusion!'

Mr. Brown's book leaves the subject just where he found it; dark and dubious as ever. His theory has only served to trouble deep waters, and make them so muddy that it was impossible to see to the bottom.

OF

THE PERIOD AT WHICH THE EARLIER SONNETS WERE WRITTEN,

AND

THE PERSON TO WHOM THEY ARE ADDRESSED.

THAT the greater portion of Shakspeare's sonnets was written at too early a period for William Herbert to have been the 'begetter,' is capable of positive, absolute, and overwhelming proof. First, we have the poet's 'sugred sonnets among his private friends,' known to Meres in 1598. Then we find ample internal evidence to prove that the mass of these sonnets are the poet's early work, and possess the characteristics of his early composition. As Coleridge has remarked, and he did not enter into the controversy concerning the 'only begetter,' they have, like the 'Venus and Adonis,' and the 'Lucrece,' 'boundless fertility and laboured condensation of thought, with perfection of sweetness in rhythm and metre. These are the essentials in the budding of a great poet. Afterwards habit and consciousness of power teach more ease, *præcipitandum liberum spiritum.*' The abundant use of antithesis also shows that his fancy had more to do with their making, than his mature imagination. Besides which, he tells us plainly enough that the early sonnets were written

with his 'pupil pen.' Sonnet 16 is explicit on this head, it is also supported by the way in which he speaks of his Muse in sonnet 32. And nothing can be more obvious than that sonnet 26 was composed and sent to his friend and patron in *written embassage*, before the poet had appeared in print. It is equally evident that this was at a time when Shakspeare did not know where his success was to be won, or how his 'moving' on his course would be guided. Meanwhile, he asks his patron to accept these sonnets in manuscript to 'witness duty' privately, not to 'show his wit' in public. Before daring to address him in a public dedication, he will wait until his star shall smile on him graciously, and his love shall be able to clothe itself in fit apparel, that is, when he is ready to put forth a poem such as he shall not shrink from offering to his patron in public; the present sonnets being exclusively private; then will he hope to show himself worthy of the friend's 'sweet respect,' but till then he will not dare to dress out his love for the critical eye of the world, will not lift up his head to boast publicly in print of that love in his heart which he now expresses in writing. Here are three indisputable facts recorded by Shakspeare himself. He writes these earlier sonnets with his 'pupil pen;' he sends them as private exercises before he appears in print, and he is looking forward hopefully to the time when he may be ready with a work which shall be more worthy of his love than are these sonnets—preliminary ambassadors that announce his purpose—which work he intends to dedicate publicly to the earl, his patron and friend, and appear in person; that is, by name; where the merits of his poetry may be tested, that is, in print.

Whosoever we may hold to have been the Lord of Shakspeare's love here addressed, he would know, however much may be hidden from us, whether or not the poet was telling the truth; and there can be no

other conclusion for us but that this 26th sonnet, together with those to which it is L'Envoy, was presented to the patron before the 'Venus and Adonis' was publicly dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, and the poet ventured to ascertain how the world would censure him for 'choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burden.'

Mr. Knight, in proof that the earlier series of these sonnets must have been written before William Herbert was old enough to be the 'begetter,' has instanced a line, first pointed out by Steevens, which was printed in a play attributed, with poetic warrant, to Shakspeare, entitled 'The Reign of King Edward III.' The same line occurs in sonnet 94 :—

Lilies that fester, smell far worse than weeds.

This drama was published in 1596, after it had been sundry times played. It is presumable that the line was first used in the sonnet privately, before it appeared in the play, as the poetic notions of the sonnet, as well as the personal and private friendship, would demand the more fastidious taste. If so, this was one of the sonnets in which William Herbert could not have been addressed. But I do not care to press the argument, nor is it necessary to emphasise a single illustration. There are so many instances of likeness in thought and image betwixt these sonnets and certain of the plays as to almost make it a matter of indifference whether the lines were used first in the play or the sonnet, although I have no doubt that as a point of literary etiquette the sonnet would have first choice. My examination of both shows that these resemblances and repetitions occur most palpably and numerously in dramas and sonnets, which I take to have been written from 1592 to 1597; they most strongly suggest, if they do not prove, both sonnets and plays to have been written about the same period, having the same dress of his mind, the composition perhaps running parallel at times.

These plays are the 'Two Gentlemen of Verona,' 'Love's Labour Lost,' a 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' and 'Romeo and Juliet.' First, we have an indefinable likeness in tone and mental tint, which is yet recognisable as are the flowers of the same season. In Shakspeare so great is the unity of feeling as it is seen pervading a whole play, that whatsoever was going on below would give visible signs on the surface whether he was working at a drama or a sonnet. Especially if, as I shall have reason to show, the same persons were aimed at in both, and in play and sonnet he was at times working from one and the same life-model. Coleridge has said of 'Romeo and Juliet' that all is youth and spring; it is 'youth with its follies, its virtues, its precipitancies; it is spring with its odours, flowers, and transciency; the same feeling commences, goes through and ends the play. The old men, the Capulets and Montagues are not common old men; they have an eagerness and hastiness, a precipitancy—the effect of spring. With Romeo, his precipitate change of passion, his hasty marriage, and his rash death, are all the effects of youth. With Juliet, love has all that is tender and melancholy in the nightingale, all that is voluptuous in the rose, with whatever is sweet in the freshness of spring; but it ends with a long deep sigh, like the breeze of evening.'

This unity of character and oneness of feeling is so perfect in Shakspeare that it not only colours the persons in the same play, but I contend that it tinges his work, of the same period, and that it is most identifiable in the spring-time of his powers, when the warmth of May was stirring the budding forces, and the music was at its sweetest, the imagery most abundantly used, even to repetition. In the earlier sonnets, and in the above-named plays certain ideas and figures continually appear and reappear. We might call them by name, as the shadow-idea or conceit, the war of roses in the red and white of

a lady's cheek, the pattern or map-idea, the idea of the antique world in opposition to the tender transciency of youth, the images of spring used as emblems of mortality, the idea of engraving on a tablet of steel, the canker in the bud, the distilling of roses to preserve their sweets, the cloud-kissing hill, and the hill-kissing sun with golden face—and many others which were the poet's early stock of imagery, the frequent use of which shows that it was yet the time of fondling, the honeymoon of fancy, the spring of his creative powers. But to pass from this indefiniteness to the actual likeness, here are a few passages compared :—

Even so my sun one early morn did shine
With all-triumphant splendour on my brow,
But, out, alack! he was but one hour mine,
The region cloud hath masked him from me now.
Sonnet 33.

O how this spring of love resembleth
The uncertain glory of an April day,
Which now shows all the beauty of the Sun,
And by-and-by a cloud takes all away!
Two Gentlemen of Verona, act i., scene 1.

Seeking that beauteous roof to *ruinate*,
Which to repair should be thy chief desire.
Sonnet 10.

O thou, that dost inhabit in my breast,
Leave not the mansion so long tenantless,
Lest, growing ruinous, the building fall,
And leave no memory of what it was.
Repair me with thy presence Silvia.
Two Gentlemen of Verona.

For canker Vice the sweetest buds doth love.
Sonnet 70.

As in the sweetest buds the eating canker dwells.
Two Gentlemen of Verona.

Let them say more that like of hear-say well,
I will not praise that purpose not to sell.—*Sonnet* 21.

Fie painted Rhetoric! O she needs it not:
To things of sale a seller's praise belongs,—
She passes praise.
Love's Labour's Lost, act iv. scene 3.

But from thine eyes this knowledge I derive.
Sonnet 14.

From women's eyes this doctrine I derive.
Love's Labour's Lost.

As from my soul which in thy breast doth lie.
Sonnet 109.

Hence ever then my heart is in thy breast.
Love's Labour's Lost.

I do forgive thy robbery, gentle Thief,
Altho' thou steal thee all my poverty.—*Sonnet* 40.

That sweet Thief which sourly robs from me.
Sonnet 35.

O me: you Juggler: you canker-worm!
You Thief of Love! What, have you come by night
And stolen my Love's heart from him?
Hermia to Helena; Midsummer Night's Dream, act iii. scene 2.

Sweet Roses do not so;
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made.
Sonnet 54.

Earthlier happy is the Rose distilled,
Than that, which, withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.
Midsummer Night's Dream.

That is my home of love: if I have ranged,
Like him that travels, I return again.—*Sonnet* 109.

My heart with her but as guest-wise sojourned,
And now to Helen it is home returned.
Midsummer Night's Dream.

Prison *my* heart in thy steel bosom's ward.
Sonnet 133.

That thro' thy bosom makes me see *my* heart.
Midsummer Night's Dream, act ii. scene 2.

Truth and Beauty shall together thrive,
If from thyself to *store* thou would'st convert:
Or else of thee this I prognosticate,
Thy end is truth's and beauty's doom and date.
Sonnet 14.

And tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding.
Sonnet 1.

Oh she is rich in beauty, only poor
That when she dies with beauty dies her *store*.
Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste?
She hath, and in *that sparing makes huge waste*.
For Beauty starved with her severity,
Cuts beauty off from all posterity.
Romeo and Juliet, act i. scene 1.

Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new.
Sonnet 27.

It seems she hangs upon the cheek of Night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear.
Romeo and Juliet, act i. scene 5.

When sparkling stars tire[1] not thou *gild'st* the even.
Sonnet 28.

Fair Helena who more *engilds* the night
Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.
Midsummer Night's Dream, act iii. scene 2.

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
Romeo and Juliet, act i. scene 5.

[1] See note to the Sonnet.

Whilst that this shadow doth such substance give.
Sonnet 37.

Ah me! how sweet is love itself possessed,
When but Love's shadows are so rich in joy!
Romeo and Juliet, act v. scene 1.

Oh what a mansion have those Vices got
Which for their habitation chose out thee.
. *Sonnet* 95.

Oh, that Deceit should dwell in such a Palace!
Romeo and Juliet, act iii. scene 2.

As the result of this comparison, my reading of the Sonnets shows that in one or two instances the expression must have first appeared in the play. This applies to the extracts from sonnet 109. But there the likeness is one of a personal character. In most instances my reading shows the thought or illustration to have been first employed in the sonnets, or that the plays and sonnets were being written at the same time. And as four of these plays were in all probability produced by the year 1596 [1], the sonnets which I have instanced, together with others that belong to the respective stories told, must have been written before that date, except in those cases where there is a still more particular determining cause for the same image or expression being used in both sonnet and drama; that is, *when, in each, they apply to the same person.* This, which is at the root of the matter, I shall illustrate in another part of my book. I have quoted and said enough to demonstrate that many of the sonnets were composed at too early a period for William Herbert to have been the inspirer, and the friend of Shakspeare who was addressed in them.

There is strong reason to suppose that the poet began to

[1] These I should date—'Two Gentlemen of Verona,' 1593; 'Love's Labour's Lost,' 1594; 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' 1595; 'Romeo and Juliet,' 1596.

write the sonnets in which he urges his young friend to marry very soon after he had read the 'Arcadia' of Sidney. I shall give evidence of this never before adduced, and in point of fact it amounts to poetic proof. In Book iii. pp. 431, 432, of that work, will be found these arguments in favour of marriage and children:—

No, no, my dear niece (said Cecropia), Nature, when you were first born, vowed you a woman, and as *she made you child of a mother, so to do your best to be mother of a child. She gave you beauty to move love; she gave you wit to know love; she gave you an excellent body to reward love; which kind of liberal rewarding* is crowned with an unspeakable felicity. For this, as it bindeth the receiver, *so it makes happy the bestower. This doth not impoverish, but enrich the giver.* O the comfort of comforts, to see your children grow up, *in whom you are, as it were eternised!* If you could conceive what a heart-tickling joy it is to see your own little ones, with awful love come running to your lap, and like *little models of yourself still carry you about them, you would think unkindness in your own thoughts*, that ever they did rebel against the measure to it. Perchance I set this blessedness before your eyes, as captains do victory before their soldiers, to which they must come thro' many pains, griefs, and dangers? No, I am content you shrink from this my counsel, if the way to come unto it be not most of all pleasant.

I know not (answered the sweet Philoclea) what contentment you speak of, but I am sure the best you can make of it (which is marriage) is a burdenous yoke.

Ah, dear niece (said Cecropia), how much you are deceived. A yoke, indeed, we all bear, laid upon us in creation, which by marriage is not increased, but thus far eased that you have a yoke-fellow to help draw through the cloddy cumbers of this world. O widow-nights, bear witness with me of the difference! How often alas, do I embrace the orphan side of my bed, which was wont to be imprinted by the body of my dear husband! Believe me, niece, man's experience is woman's best eye-sight. *Have you ever seen a pure rose-water kept in a crystal glass? How fine it looks! how sweet it smells while the beautiful glass imprisons it!* Break the prison, and let the water take

his own course, doth it not embrace the dust, and lose all his former sweetness and fairness? Truly so are we, if we have not the stay rather than the restraint of crystalline marriage. My heart melts to think of the sweet comfort I, in that happy time, received, when I had never cause to care but the care was doubled; when I never rejoiced, but that I saw my joy shine in another's eyes. And is a solitary life as good as this? *Then, can one string make as good music as a consort?* Then, can one colour set forth a beauty?

Here we discover, crowded into a brief passage, half the very arguments, illustrated by several of the very same images which Shakspeare has used in his earliest group of sonnets. Here, in the lines italicised, is the suggestion of sonnet 13:—

> Dear, my Love, you know,
> You had a Father: let your son say so!

The argument of sonnet 11,—

> Which bounteous gift thou should'st in bounty cherish.

The suggestion of sonnet 6,—

> Which happies those that pay the willing loan.

Also of the children—same sonnet—which are to 'eternise,' so that death shall leave him 'living in posterity,'—

> When your sweet issue your sweet form should bear.
> *Sonnet* 13.

The plea, 'O change thy thought,' because it is unkindly, sonnet 10; the image of the widow with her children who keep her husband's form in mind, sonnet 9; the 'liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,' sonnet 5, and the following out of the illustration in the next sonnet, 'Make sweet some vial;' and the argument of the 'single string' in sonnet 8, reversely applied: all these are in that brief passage of Sidney's prose, and all are used for the same purpose, the main difference being that in the 'Arcadia' it is a woman speaking to a woman. Various

other illustrations might be cited, to show that Shakspeare has literally adopted sentiment, idea, and image, one after the other, from the 'Arcadia.' His starting-point in the first sonnet will be found in these words of Sidney's; 'Beauty is a gift which those on whomsoever the heavens have bestowed it are without question bound to use it for the noble purpose for which it was created;'—that is, of 'increase.' Readers of the sonnets will see how large a space that sentiment occupies in the first series. Again, in the 'Arcadia,' the question is asked, 'Will you suffer your beauty to be hidden in the wrinkles?' &c. And the second sonnet says:—

> When forty Winters shall besiege thy brow,
> And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
> Thy Youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,
> Will be a tattered weed of small worth held;
> Then, being askt where all thy beauty lies;
> Where all the treasure of thy lusty days,
> To say within thine own deep-sunken eyes,
> Were an all-eating shame and thriftless praise.

Here also is a further illustration of sonnet 6:—

> That indeed is the right happiness which is not only in itself happy, but can also derive the happiness to another.

The object which Shakspeare had in writing these early sonnets is so appositely worded in a passage of the 'Arcadia,' (Book iii. p. 462) as to suggest that the reading of that work was one of the immediate incentives to the writing of the sonnets. 'The earnest desire I have to see these virtues of yours knit fast with such zeal of devotion (indeed the best bond) which the most politic wits have found to hold man's wit in well-doing.' Shakspeare was undoubtedly an adapter of other men's ideas for dramatic purposes, but it would be difficult to identify the source of so much sequent thought and sentiment as is to be found in the present instance. It is essentially the result

of great admiration, such as belongs to a somewhat youthful time of life. In borrowing from Sidney he was not taking from a poet unknown or unnoticed, but from a work that was among the choicest favourites of the age, and one of the most widely read. The 'Arcadia' was first published in 1590, and a copy of it would soon be in our poet's hands; we may assume that he would at once seize the cue there given, and expand the hints on marriage in his first sonnets. It is a kind of unconscious plagiarism only possible to the young and immature mind; the effect of a first acquaintanceship, and the warm affection felt for a new work. A careful study of the 'Arcadia' will reveal how greatly Shakspeare must have loved the book, and how deeply its influence dyed his mind during those years, from 1590 to 1596, in which a large portion of the sonnets was written. Sir Walter Scott just reversed the facts, when he fancied that Shakspeare's Sonnets had been in the hands of Sidney.

Thus the sonnets themselves supply proof in various kinds of evidence, that a large number of them were written too early for William Herbert to have been their 'begetter,' or the friend who is the object of Shakspeare's affection. Many of them were written by the poet's 'pupil pen' before he had ventured to appear in public: therefore, before he printed in 1593. On other grounds I shall show, from internal evidence, that another group was written before the death of Marlowe, in the same year. Consequently, these must belong to the 'Sonnets among his private friends,' which were known to Meres in 1598; and, as William Herbert did not come to live in London till the year 1598,[1] and was then only eighteen years of age, he cannot be the person addressed in these Sonnets during a number of years previously!

At the outset of our inquiry, and on the very face of things, it is patent that William Herbert cannot

[1] Sydney Memoirs, vol. ii. p. 43.

be the man whom Shakspeare so anxiously urged to marry, to whom he dedicated eternal love; and to all who can fairly weigh the facts, it must be just as evident that the Earl of Southampton is the patron and friend whom our poet loved, and by whom he was so much beloved. Amongst the few precious personal relics of Shakspeare are the short prose epistles in which he inscribes his two poems to the Earl of Southampton. These are remarkable revelations of his feeling towards the Earl. The first is shaded with a delicate reserve, and addressed to the *patron*; the second, printed one year afterwards, glows out full-hearted in a dedication of personal love for the *friend*. The difference is so great, and the growth of the friendship so rapid, as to indicate that the 'Venus and Adonis' was sent to the Earl some time before it was printed.

The dedication runs thus:—

Right Honourable,—I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your Lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burthen: only, if your honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honoured you with some graver labour. But, if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a godfather, and never after ear so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest. I leave it to your honourable survey, and your honour to your heart's content; which I wish may always answer your own wish, and the world's hopeful expectation.

Your Honour's in all duty,

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE.

Now, as our poet had distinctly promised in sonnet 26, that when he was ready to appear in print and put worthy apparel on his love, he would then dare to boast how much he loved his patron and friend, and show his head, where he might be proved, we cannot but conclude that the dedication to the 'Venus and Adonis' is in part

fulfilment of the intentions expressed in that sonnet. I take the sonnet to be as much a private dedication of the poet's first poem, as this epistle was afterwards the public one, and hold that in it he as much promised the first poem, as in the prose inscription he promises the future 'Lucrece,' when he vows to take advantage of all idle hours till he has honoured the earl with some graver labour, and that the 'Venus and Adonis' followed the promise of the sonnet, just as one year later the 'Lucrece' followed the dedication of the first printed poem to the Earl of Southampton. Therefore, the person who was privately addressed in 'written embassage' as the lord of Shakspeare's love, must be one with him whom the poet afterwards publicly ventured to address as such, in fulfilment of intentions already recorded. The feeling of the earliest sonnets is exactly that of this first public inscription; it is reticent and noticeably modest, whilst in each there is an expression that gives the same personal image. In the *first* sonnet, this lord of Shakspeare's love is 'the world's fresh ornament;' and in the *first* dedication, the poet hopes his young patron may answer to the 'world's hopeful expectation.' In both we have Hope a-tiptoe at gaze on this new wonder of youth and beauty, this freshest blossom of the young nobility.

In the next year, 1594, Shakspeare dedicated his poem of 'Lucrece' to the Earl of Southampton as follows:—

> The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end, whereof this pamphlet, without beginning, is but a superfluous moiety. *The warrant I have of your honourable disposition not the worth of my untutored lines,* makes it assured of acceptance. *What I have done is yours; what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have devoted yours.*[1] *Were my worth greater my*

[1] In the Malone and Grenville copies this reads 'being part in all I have, devoted yours,' which punctuation has been preserved. But it is so obviously an error of the press as not even to demand a passing remark. It is obstructive to the sense, and severs what Shakspeare meant to clench by his last repetition of '*yours*.

duty would show greater; meantime, as it is, *it is bound to your lordship*, to whom I wish long life, still lengthened with happiness.

Your Lordship's in all duty.

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE.

Again the dedication echoes the 26th sonnet. 'The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines,' and 'were my worth greater, my duty would show greater,' are the prose of the previous 'to witness duty, not to show my wit.' Then we have the 'lord of our poet's love,' to whom his service was vowed, his duty bound in '*vassailage*,' identified in the person of Lord Southampton, to whom Shakspeare is *in duty bound*, as in the sonnet where 'thy merit hath my *duty strongly knit*;' and to this lord the poet has dedicated all that he has done, and all that he has to do. Thus we have it recorded in 1594, by Shakspeare himself, that the relationship of poet and patron was so close, the friendship had so far ripened, that Shakspeare could dedicate 'love without end,' and he uses these never-to-be-forgotten words:—'*What I have done is yours; what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have devoted yours.*' That is, the Earl of Southampton is proclaimed to be the lord of our poet's love, 'love without end,'—the man to whom he is bound, and the patron for whom he has hitherto written, and for whom, as is understood betwixt them, he has yet to write. 'What I have to do is yours'—so there is work in hand —'being part as you are in all that my duty and love have devoted to your service.' What work in hand *devoted* to Southampton can this be, save the sonnets which he was then composing? Here is a promise made, which was never fulfilled in any other shape. But Shakspeare was not a man to make light of his word. He would not give a pledge privately or publicly, and leave it unredeemed. He made a promise in the 26th sonnet,

which he fulfilled in 1593 with the 'Venus and Adonis.' In his inscription to that poem, he makes a further promise, this he carries out in dedicating the 'Lucrece' to the Earl of Southampton. In the second public inscription, he speaks still more emphatically of work that he has to do for the earl, not like a poet addressing a patron, but as a familiar friend alluding to something only known amongst friends. It is a public promise respecting work that has a private history; its precise speciality has never yet been fathomed, although something marked in the meaning has been felt; it could only have had fulfilment in the sonnets, and that in a very particular way.

As the 'Venus and Adonis' was printed in 1593, we may safely assume that the first sonnets, inclusive of the 26th, were not written later than the year 1592. Shakspeare might have met Southampton as early as 1589, for in the June of that year the earl came to London, and entered himself as member of Gray's Inn. The young earl's fondness for plays is well known, and his step-father, Sir Thomas Heneage, being Treasurer of the Chamber and Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household, as well as Captain of the Guard to the Queen, his immediate access to players and playwrights would be easy; his good word in their favour would be eagerly sought.

But this was not an ordinary case of a poet in search of a patron. Shakspeare must have kept his poem by him some years after it was written before he printed it. He calls it the 'first heir of his invention,' at a time when he was known to have written some plays, and had a hand in others. This does not look as though he had been an eager seeker of a patron; and I hold that sonnet 25 tells us how the earl had sought out the poet who 'unlooked for joys' in that he 'honours most'—the acquaintanceship and friendship of one so much unlike the ordinary patrons of literature in those days.

Taking the year 1592, then, as the date of the first

group of sonnets, we shall find the young earl of Southampton's age precisely reckoned up in sonnet 16,—

Now stand you on the top of happy hours,

which shows us that the youth has sprung lightly up the ladder of his life, and now stands on the last golden round of boyhood; he is at the top of his 'teens.' The Earl of Southampton was born October 6th, 1573, consequently in 1592 he was nineteen years of age.

The very first sonnet addresses one who is the 'world's fresh ornament,'—that is, the budding favourite at Court, the fresh grace of its circle, the latest representative there of youthful spring; 'the expectancy and rose of the fair State!' Southampton was, in truth, the 'child of State,' under the special protection of the Court. He was recommended to Her Majesty's notice by the loss of his father at so early an age, and by the quiet service of his stepfather, who was an old servant of the Queen's, as well as favoured with the best word of his guardian, Burleigh, who at one time hoped to bring about a marriage betwixt Southampton and his own granddaughter. We shall see further, that such was his place in Her Majesty's regards, that an endeavour was made by Sir Fulke Greville and others, to get the Earl of Southampton installed as royal favourite in the stead of Essex. 'There was a time,' says Sir Henry Wotton,[1] sometime secretary to the Earl of Essex, 'when Sir Fulke Greville (Lord Brook), a man intrinsically with him (Essex), or at the least, admitted to his melancholy hours, either belike espying some weariness in the Queen, or perhaps (with little change of the word, though more in the danger), some wariness towards him, and working upon the present matter (as he was dexterous and close), had almost superinduced into favour the Earl of Southampton, which yet being timely discovered, my

[1] *Reliquiæ Wottonianæ*, p. 163.

Lord of Essex chose to evaporate his thoughts in a sonnet (being his common way), to be sung before the Queen (as it was) by one Hales, in whose voice she took some pleasure; whereof the couplet, methinks, had as much of the Hermit as of the Poet.' I suspect that Wotton has not gone quite to the root of the affair, and that the real ground on which the motion of Sir Fulke Greville was made, was a strong feeling of personal favour on the part of Her Majesty towards the young Earl of Southampton; this to some extent is implied in the fact recorded, but there was more in it than Wotton had seen from the one side. It is difficult to define what this royal favour meant, or what was the nature of Her Majesty's affection, but it most assuredly existed, and was shown, and Essex manifested his jealousy of it, as in the cases of Southampton and Mountjoy. Perhaps it was an old maid's passion for her puppies! In judging of Elizabeth's character, we must remember that some of her richest, most vital feelings had no proper sphere of action, though their motion was not necessarily improper. She did not live the married life, and Nature sometimes plays tricks when the vestal fires are fed by the animal passions, that are thus covered up, but all aglow; these will give an added warmth to the imagination, a sparkle to the eye, and a youth to the affections in the later years of life, such as may easily be misinterpreted. I am not raising any scandal against Elizabeth, when, supported by the suggestive hint of Wotton, I conjecture that the persistent opposition of the Queen to Southampton's marriage may have had in it a personal feeling which, under the circumstances, could have no other expression than in thwarting the wedded happiness of others.

It is in this sense of the new favourite at Court, that I read—

> The World's fresh ornament
> And only herald of the gaudy spring,

and find in it another feature whereby we can identify the Earl of Southampton as the person addressed.

Next—and here we feel an endearing touch of Shakspeare's nature—the youth is so evidently *fatherless*, that it seems strange it should have been hitherto overlooked. The plea all through the first sonnets is to one who is the sole prop of his house, and the only bearer of the family name; hence the importance of marrying, on which the poet lays such stress. It seems to me that the first sonnet opens with an allusion to the *early* death of the earl's father:—

> From fairest creatures we desire increase,
> That thereby Beauty's rose might never die,
> But as the *riper* should by time decease,
> *His tender heir* might *bear his memory*!

In sonnet 10 he is charged with not inclining his ear to the advice given to him that he should marry. Thus:—

> Seeking that *beauteous roof to ruinate*,
> Which to *repair should be thy chief desire*.

We find the same use made of the verb *to ruinate* in Henry VI., part iii. act 5:—

> I will not *ruinate* my father's house.

And in *the absence of Pericles* one of the lords says—

> This kingdom is without a head,
> Like goodly buildings left without a roof.

Of course the roof would not need repairing if it were not going to decay. Accordingly we find that Southampton's father—head of the house—died in 1581, ere the young earl was quite eight years old, and within four years of that time his elder brother died. Again in sonnet 13 the poet urges—

> Who *lets so fair a house fall to decay*,
> Which *husbandry in honour might uphold*?

And, although aware that the lines may not be confined to the literal reading, I cannot avoid thinking that the underlying fact was in the poet's mind when in the same sonnet he wrote—

> Dear my love, you know
> You *had* a father; let your son say so.

Also in sonnet 3 he tells the earl—

> Thou art thy Mother's glass, and she, in thee,
> Calls back the lovely April of her prime.

There is no mention of his having a father; there is an allusion to his having *had* one, and the mother is referred to as though she were the only living parent. Shakspeare could not speak of the earl's likeness to his father, who had died before the poet came to London; he is forced to make use of the 'mother's glass,' when the father, had there been one in existence, is demanded by the hereditary nature of the argument. Also, it makes greatly in favour of my reading that some of the arguments taken from Sidney's prose have been altered precisely to suit the case as put by me. The speaker in the 'Arcadia' says, 'Nature made you child of a mother' (Philoclea's mother 'Lettice Knollys' was then living), but Shakspeare says, 'you *had* a father' (the Earl of Southampton's father being dead). The description is also differentiated by the '*tender* heir,' who, 'as the *riper* should by time decease,' might 'bear his memory,' and by the house-roof going to decay, 'which to repair' by 'husbandry in honour,' should be the chief desire of the person addressed. Thus, we have the Earl of Southampton identified as the lord of Shakspeare's love, and the object of these early sonnets by his exact age at the time when Shakspeare speaks of appearing soon in print, by his position as the 'fresh ornament' of the Court world and Court society, and by the fatherless condition which gave a weightier

emphasis to the poet's argument for marriage, a more paternal tone of anxious interest to his personal affection. To revert for a moment to the words of Meres, it is obvious that the 'private friends' of Shakspeare alluded to must have had as much to do with the critic's mention as the poet had; it would be made on their account as much as on Shakspeare's. Who else could prove the opinion recorded? And certainly there was no living patron of literature at the time more likely to elicit the public reference of Meres than Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton.

On going a little further afield we may glean yet more evidence that the Earl of Southampton is the object of these sonnets. 'Thy poet,' Shakspeare calls himself in sonnet 79, and one of the earl's two poets in sonnet 83. Whose poet could he have been but Southampton's either before or after the dedication of his two poems? Of whom, save Southampton, should he say—

> Sing to the ear that doth thy lays esteem,
>
> *Sonnet* 100.

when it was that earl who *had so esteemed the poet's lays*? To whom, except this noble fellow and personal friend, could he speak of his sonnets as the *poor returns*,

> The *barren tender* of *a poet's debt*?
>
> *Sonnet* 83.

which is a most palpable acknowledgement of the earl's munificence—good, even for a thousand pounds. Moreover, we have in sonnet 78, the recognition of the earl *after publishing*, just as we have him pointed out in sonnet 26, before the poet had printed. 'Thine eyes that taught the dumb on high to sing!' These must have belonged to the man who caused the poet to speak aloud for the first time in public. In sonnet 108 he says his love is great, 'even as when first I hallowed thy fair

name.' Whose name did he hallow or honour save that of Southampton? Again in sonnet 102:—

> Our love was new and then but in the spring,
> When I was wont to greet it with my lays.

What love but that betwixt this earl and Shakspeare did the poet ever greet with his lays? And sonnet 105 tells us that up to the time at which it was written, the affection must have been undivided; and the patron of both sonnets and poems must have been one and the same person. For—

> All alike my songs and praises be,
> To one, of one, still such and ever so.

But I shall not only show that the Earl of Southampton was the lord of Shakspeare's love, and the 'dear friend' of these sonnets, the budding favourite at court, the fatherless youth of nineteen, the patron to whom Shakspeare sent 'what *silent love* had writ' before he publicly dedicated his 'love without end;' those sonnets that were the *dumb presagers of his speaking breast*, and as such preceded and heralded the *spoken* thought and feeling of his public inscriptions. I shall also show how Southampton alone could have been spoken of as *becoming* the 'tenth Muse' of sonnet 38, not in the beginning of the sonnets, but after many of them had been begotten, and prove how he only could be a part in what Shakspeare had *devoted to him*. And lastly, I shall show that whether the sonnets be addressed to the object of them by Shakspeare himself, or spoken dramatically, it is the character of Southampton and that alone, with its love of change, its shifting hues, its passionate impetuosity, its spirit restless as flame, its tossings to and fro, its hurrying here and there to seek in strife abroad the satisfaction denied to him in peace at home, that we shall find reflected all through the larger number of them, and Southampton only who is congratulated in sonnet 107 on having escaped his doom of imprisonment for life, through the death of the Queen.

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

HENRY WRIOTHESLEY,

EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON.

THE name of Southampton was once well known on a past page of our rough island story; his swaling plume was looked to in the battle's front, and recognised as worn by a natural leader of fighting men. He was of the flower of England's chivalry and a close follower of Sir Philip Sidney in heading the onset and breaking hardily on the enemy with a noble few, without pausing to count numbers or weigh odds.

With a most natural aptitude for war, he never had sufficient scope: one of the jewels of Elizabeth's realm did not meet with a fit setting at her hand; a bright particular star of her constellation was dimmed and diminished through a baleful conjunction. But he has a rich reprisal in being the friend of Shakspeare, beloved by him in life, embalmed by him in memory; once a sharer in his own personal affection, and for ever the partaker of his earthly immortality.

Henry Wriothesley was the second of the two sons of Henry, the second earl of the name. His mother was the daughter of Anthony Brown, first Viscount Montague. The founder of the family was Thomas Wriothesley, our earl's grandfather, a favourite servant of Henry VIII.,

who granted to him the Promonstratensian abbey of Tichfield, Hants, endowed with about 280*l.* per year in 1538, creating him Baron Tichfield about the same time, and Earl of Southampton in 1546. He died July 30, 1550. A rare work entitled 'Honour in his Perfection,' by G. M., 4to, 1624,[1] contains the following notice of our Southampton's ancestors:—'Next (O Britain!) read unto thy softer nobility the story of the noble house of Southampton; that shall bring new fire to their bloods, and make of the little sparks of honour great flames of excellency. Show them the life of Thomas Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, who was both an excellent soldier and an admirable scholar; who not only served the great king, his master, Henry VIII. in his wars, but in his council chamber;[2] not only in the field but on the bench, within his courts of civil justice. This man, for his excellent parts, was made Lord Chancellor of England, where he governed with that integrity of heart, and true mixture of conscience and justice, that he won the hearts of both king and people.

'After this noble prince succeeded his son, Henry, Earl of Southampton, a man of no less virtue, prowess, and wisdom, ever beloved and favoured of his prince, highly reverenced and favoured of all that were in his own rank, and bravely attended and served by the best gentlemen of those countries wherein he lived. His muster-roll never consisted of four lacqueys and a coachman, but of a whole troop of at least a hundred well-mounted gentle-

[1] 'Honour in his Perfection' supposed by Malone to have been written by Gervase Markham. But Gervase was accustomed to write his name Jarvis or Iarvis. He signs his sonnets dedicatory to his tragedy of Sir Richard Grenville, his dedication to the 'Poem of Poems or Sion's Muse' and his contributions to 'England's Helicon' with the initials J. M. not G. M. I rather think that 'Honour in his Perfection' was written by Griffith or Griffin Markham, the brother of Gervase. He served under the Earl of Southampton in Ireland, as Colonel of Horse, and was an intimate personal friend.

[2] As Secretary of State.

men and yeomen. He was not known in the streets by guarded liveries but by gold chains; not by painted butterflies, ever running as if some monster pursued them, but by tall goodly fellows that kept a constant pace both to guard his person and to admit any man to their lord which had serious business. This prince could not steal or drop into an ignoble place, neither might do anything unworthy of his great calling; for he ever had a world of testimonies about him.' This earl was attached to Popery, and a zealous adherent to the cause of Mary, Queen of Scots; which led to his imprisonment in the Tower in 1572. He died October 4, 1581, at the early age of thirty-five, bequeathing his body to be buried in the chapel of Tichfield Church, where his mother had been interred, his father having been buried in the choir of St. Andrew's Church, Holborn; and appointing that 200*l.* should be distributed amongst the poor within his several lordships, to pray for his soul and the souls of his ancestors.

'When it pleased the divine goodness to take to his mercy this great earl, he left behind to succeed him Henry, Earl of Southampton, his son (now living), being then a child. But here methinks, *Cinthius aurem vellet*, something pulls me by the elbow and bids me forbear, for flattery is a deadly sin, and will damn reputation. But, shall I that ever loved and admired this earl, that lived many years where I daily saw this earl, that knew him before the wars, in the wars, and since the wars—shall I that have seen him endure the worst malice or vengeance that sea, tempests, or thunder could utter, that have seen him undergo all the extremities of war; that have seen him serve in person on the enemy—shall I that have seen him receive the reward of a soldier (before the face of an enemy) for the best act of a soldier (done upon the enemy)—shall I be scared with shadows? No; truth is my mistress, and though I can write nothing which

can equal the least spark of fire within him, yet for her sake will I speak something which may inflame those that are heavy and dull, and of mine own temper. This earl (as I said before) came to his father's dignity in childhood, spending that and his other younger times in the study of good letters (to which the University of Cambridge is a witness), and after confirmed that study with *travel* and *foreign observation*.' He was born October 6, 1573. His father and elder brother both died before he had reached the age of twelve years. On December 11, 1585, he was admitted of St. John's College, Cambridge, with the denomination of Henry, Earl of Southampton, as appears by the books of that house; on June 6, 1589, he took his degree of Master of Arts, and after a residence of nearly five years, he finally left the University for London. He is said to have won the high eulogies of his contemporaries for his uncommon proficiency, and to have been admitted about three years later to the same degree, by incorporation, at Oxford.

The Inns of Court, says Aulicus Coquinariæ, were always the place of esteem with the Queen, who considered that they fitted youth for the future, and were the best antechambers to her Court. And it was customary for the nobility, as well as the most considerable gentry of England, to spend some time in one of the Inns of Court, on purpose to complete their course of studies. Soon after leaving the University, the young earl entered himself a member of Gray's Inn, and on the authority of a roll preserved in the library of Lord Hardwicke, he is said to have been a member so late as the year 1611. Malone was inclined to believe that he rather was admitted a member of Lincoln's Inn, to the chapel of which society the earl gave one of the admirably painted windows, in which his arms may be yet seen.

One of the earliest notices of the earl in the calendar of

State Papers,[1] gives us the note of preparation for the memorable year of the 'Armada,' in which the encroaching tide of Spanish power was dashed back broken, from the wooden walls of England. 'June 14th,' we read, 'the Earl of Southampton's armour is to be scoured and dressed up by his executors!' In consequence of his father's death, the young earl became the ward of Lord Burghley. He was, as he said on his trial, brought up under the Queen. Sir Thomas Heneage, his stepfather, had been a favourite servant of the Queen from his youth; made by her, Treasurer first, of her Chamber, and then Vice-Chamberlain; appointed in 1588 to be Treasurer at War of the armies to be levied to withstand any foreign invasion of the realm of England; and successor to Walsingham in the office of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, in 1590.

October 14th, 1590, Mary, Countess of Southampton, writes to Burghley, and thanks him for the long time he had entrusted her son with her. She now returns the earl, and hopes that Burghley will so dispose of him, that his exercises be such as may and must grace persons of his quality. He only is able to work her son's future happiness.[2]

It appears that Burghley had contemplated the marriage of the earl with his granddaughter, for, on the 15th July, 1590, Sir Thomas Stanhope writes to Lord Burghley and assures him that he had never sought to procure the young Earl of Southampton in marriage for his daughter, as he knew Burghley intended a marriage between him and the Lady Vere. And on the 19th September, same year, Anthony Viscount Montague writes to Lord Burghley to the effect that he has had a conversation with the Earl of Southampton as to his engagement of marriage with Burghley's granddaughter. The Countess of Southampton

[1] *Domestic Series of the Reign of Elizabeth*, 1581-1590, p. 417.
[2] *Calendar of State Papers*, Ib. p. 693.

the earl's mother, and Montague's daughter, is not aware of any alteration in her son's mind.[1] The son's mind was changed, however; the lady was destined only to play the part of Rosaline until Juliet appeared; the impression in wax was doomed to be melted when once the real fire of love was kindled.

About this time the frankness of the earl's nature and the ardour of his friendship flashed out in a characteristic act of reckless generosity. Two of his young friends had got into trouble; the provocation is not known, but they had broken into the house of one Henry Long, at Draycot in Wiltshire, and, in a struggle, Long was killed. These were the two brothers, Sir Charles and Sir Henry Danvers. They informed the earl that a life had been unfortunately lost in an affray, and threw themselves under his protection. He concealed them for some time in his house at Tichfield, and afterwards conveyed them to France, where Sir Charles Danvers became highly distinguished as a soldier under Henry IV. He returned to England in 1598, having with great difficulty obtained the Queen's pardon, and his personal attachment to the Earl of Southampton caused him to lose his head on Tower Hill, in March, 1601. Sir Henry lived for many years after his brother's death; he was created Baron Danvers by King James I., in the first year of his reign, and by King Charles I., Earl of Derby.

The young Earl of Southampton became so great a favourite at Court and was noticed so graciously by Her Majesty, as to excite the displeasure and jealousy of the Earl of Essex. As in the case of Sir Charles Blount, Essex appears to have personally resented the favour shown by the Queen to Southampton, and, we are told that *emulations* and *differences* arose betwixt the two earls, who were rivals for Her Majesty's affection. Of this we get a glimpse in the story told by Wootton. Also

[1] *Calendar of State Papers*, p. 688.

the favours, the rivalry, and the consequent personal differences, are implied in the following note of Rowland White's, in the 'Sydney Memoirs,'[1] dated Oct. 1st, 1595:—'My Lord of Essex kept his bed all yesterday; his Favour continues *quam diu se bene gesserit. Yet, my Lord of Southampton is a careful waiter here, and,* sede vacante, *doth receive favours at her Majesty's hands; all this without breach of amity between them*'—(i.e. the two earls).

But a new influence was now at work to make the rivals friends. The Earl of Southampton had met the 'faire Mistress Vernon,' and fallen deeply in love with her. This affection for the Earl of Essex's cousin, joined the hands of the two earls in the closest grasp of friendship, which was only relaxed by death. Love for the cousin was the incentive for Southampton to cast in his lot with the fortunes of Essex, and become the other self of his friend. There were reasons why there should be no further breach of amity between the two earls. Eight days before the date of White's letter just quoted, he had written thus,—'My Lord of Southampton doth with *too much familiarity* court the fair Mistress Vernon, while his friends, observing the Queen's humours towards my Lord of Essex, do what they can to bring her to favour him, but it is yet in vain.'[2] This lady, who afterwards became Countess of Southampton, was a maid of honour, and a beauty of Elizabeth's Court; she was cousin to the Earl of Essex, and daughter of Sir John Vernon of Hodnet, by Elizabeth Devereux, Essex's aunt. Shakspeare's acquaintance with Lord and Lady Southampton, and consequent knowledge of her family belonging to Shropshire, may have led him to introduce a Sir John Vernon in 'The First Part of Henry IV.' Hodnet is thirteen miles from Shrewsbury, and the high road leading to the latter place passes over the plain where the battle was fought in which Falstaff performed

[1] Vol. ii. p. 61.

[2] *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 348.

his prodigies of valour for 'a long hour by Shrewsbury clock.'

Rowland White's statement contains matter of great moment to our subject. The Earl of Southampton's love for Elizabeth Vernon cost him the favour of the Queen. Her Majesty was not to be wrought on, even through 'her humours towards my Lord of Essex,' to restore the fallen favourite to his lost place in her regards. As the breach of amity betwixt the two earls had closed, that between her Majesty and Southampton continually widened. She forbade his marriage, and opposed it in a most implacable spirit. Whatsoever may have been the Queen's motive, she certainly did not forgive, first the falling in love, and next the marriage of the Earl of Southampton with Elizabeth Vernon.

Birch quotes a letter of Antonio Perez, written in Latin, dated May 20th, 1595, which contains a reference to the Earl of Essex and his ill situation at the time at court, and he suggests that the cause probably arose from the Queen's displeasure at the share taken by Essex in the marriage of his cousin to the Earl of Southampton without her Majesty's permission or knowledge.

But as the marriage did not take place until late in 1598, we must look a little further for the meaning of Mr. Standen's letter to Mr. Bacon, same date, in which he relates what he had learned the night before among the court ladies, to the effect that the Lady Rich, Elizabeth Vernon's cousin, having visited the lady of Sir Robert Cecil at her house, understood that Elizabeth Vernon and her *ill good man* had waited on Sunday two hours to have spoken with the Queen, but could not. At last Mistress Vernon sent in word that she desired her Majesty's resolution. To which the Queen replied that she was sufficiently resolved, but that the next day she would talk with her farther.[1] Whatsoever the precise

[1] *Birch's Elizabeth*, vol. i. p. 238.

occurrence may have been, it is doubtless the one referred to by Rowland White. The earl had been courting Mistress Vernon too warmly for the cloistral coolness of Elizabeth's court; this had reached her Majesty's ears. I surmise that the affair was similar in kind to that of Raleigh and Mrs. Throckmorton two or three years before, and that the earl and Mistress Vernon were most anxious to get married, as their prototypes had done. But Elizabeth, either for reasons *or motives* of her own, '*resolved*' they should not. We may consider this to have been one of the various occasions on which Southampton was ordered to absent himself from court. We shall hear more of the subject from the sonnets. Nearly two years later the familiarity became still more apparent, in spite of the Queen's attempt to keep the persecuted pair apart. The earl was again ordered to keep away from the court. The gossips, who had seen the coming events casting their shadows before, were at length justified. But I am anticipating.

The exact period of 'travel and foreign observation,' alluded to by the author of 'Honour in his Perfection,' is unidentifiable, but I conjecture that 'leave of absence' and a journey followed the explosion of 1595, when the earl had been courting the fair Mistress Vernon 'with too much familiarity.' Her Majesty's 'resolve,' expressed in reply to the message of Elizabeth Vernon, is sufficiently ominous, although not put into words for us. It has been stated that the earl was with Essex, as an unattached volunteer, at the attack on Cadiz, in the summer of 1596. This, Malone asserted on grounds apparently strong. In the Catalogue of the MSS. in the library of the Earl of Denbigh—'Catalogi Librarum Manuscriptorum Angliæ,' &c., vol. ii. p. 36, where the following notice is found: 'Diana of Montemayor (the first part), done out of Spanish by Thomas Wilson, Esq., in the year 1596, and dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, *who was then upon the Spanish*

voyage with my Lord of Essex.'[1] He could not, however, have left England in company with Essex, as on the 1st of July, 1596, the earl executed at London a power of attorney to Richard Rounching to receive a thousand pounds of George, Earl of Cumberland, and John Taylor his servant. Also it may be calculated that if the earl had been in action on that occasion, we should have heard of his part in the fight. But it is quite probable that he followed in the wake of the expedition, and the legal transaction has the look of an arrangement or agreement such as might have been made on leaving England in haste. Being too late to share in the storming of Cadiz, which was taken before Southampton could have left London, he may have joined his friend Roger Manners, Earl of Rutland, who was then making a tour of France, Italy and Switzerland.[2] From the time that the Queen forbade his marriage with Elizabeth Vernon, and ordered him to absent himself from the court, up to the death of Essex, it was a period of great trial and vexation for a proud impetuous spirit like his. Thwarted in his dearest wish to wed the woman he loved, and constantly checked in his public career, he became more and more impatient when struck by the stings and arrows of his cruel and outrageous fortune, that so pitilessly pursued him. Outbreaks of his fiery blood, and 'tiffs' with his mistress were frequent. He appears to have got away from London as often as he could; though most anxious to do England service he 'hoisted sail to every wind' that would blow him the farthest from her. He was most unlike his

[1] It has been a subject of wonder how Shakspeare got at the Diana of Montemayor, to take so much of his 'Two Gentlemen of Verona' from it. But as both he and Wilson were under the patronage of Southampton, there can be nothing more likely than that Shakspeare had a look at Wilson's translation long before it was printed. Attention had been drawn to the drama by Sidney's translations from it made for Lady Rich.

[2] It was on the occasion of the Earl of Rutland's journey in 1595 that Essex addressed to him the long letter of advice which may be found in the Harleian MSS (4888. 16.)

stepfather, Sir Thomas Heneage, who had been for so many years a docile creature of the court, and who, as Camden tells us, was of so spruce and polite address, that he seemed purely calculated for a court. Southampton had not the spirit that bows as the wind blows. He was more at home in mail than in silken suit. Like the 'brave Lord Willoughby,' he could not belong to the *Reptiliæ* of court life. He had a will of his own, a spirit that stood erect and panted for free air, and that trick of the frank tongue that so often attends the full heart of youthful honesty. The words of Mr. Robert Markham, written to John Harington, Esq., somewhat apply to the Earl of Southampton: 'I doubt not your valour, nor your labour, but that damnable uncovered Honesty will mar your fortunes.' And the Queen's persistent opposition to his love, her determination to punish him for disobedience and wilfulness, kept him on the continual fret, and tended to turn his restlessness into recklessness, his hardihood into fool-hardihood, his daring into dare-devilry, the honey of his love into the very gall of bitterness.

Rowland White, writing to Sir Robert Sidney at Flushing, March 2, 1597, says,[1] 'My lord of Southampton hath leave for one year to travel, and purposes to be with you before Easter. He told my lady that he would see you before she should.' The earl was for leaving England again in his discontent and weariness. But the famous Island Voyage was now talked of, and Southampton was not the man to lose a chance if there were fighting to be done. He had some difficulty in obtaining a command, but was at length appointed to the 'Garland.' Rowland White, in his letter of April 9, says, 'My lord of Southampton, by 200 means, hath gotten leave to go with them' (Essex and Raleigh). The influence here exerted in

[1] *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 24.

favour of the earl was Cecil's. Whatsoever the feeling of Cecil toward Essex, he proved himself on various occasions to have been the true good friend of the Earl of Southampton. 'The Earl was made commander of the "Garland,"' to quote once more from 'Honour in his Perfection,' and was 'Vice-admiral of the first squadron. In his first putting out to sea (July, 1597) he saw all the terrors and evils which the sea had power to show to mortality, insomuch that the general and the whole fleet (except some few ships of which this earl's was one) were driven back into Plymouth, but this earl, in spite of storms, held out his course, made the coast of Spain, and after, upon an adviso, returned. The fleet, new reinforced, made forth to sea again with better prosperity, came to the islands of the Azores, and there first took the island of Fiall, sacked and burnt the great town, took the high fort which was held impregnable, and made the rest of the islands, as Pike, Saint George's, and Gratiosa, obedient to the general's service. Then the fleet returning from Fiall, it pleased the general to divide it, and he went himself on the one side of Gratiosa, and the Earl of Southampton, with some three more of the Queen's ships and a few small merchant ships sailed on the other; when early on a morning by spring of day, this brave Southampton lit upon the King of Spain's Indian fleet, laden with treasure, being about four or five and thirty sail, and most of them great warlike galleons. They had all the advantage that sea, wind, number of ships, or strength of men could give them; yet, like a fearful herd they fled from the fury of our earl, who, notwithstanding, gave them chase with all his canvas. One he took, and sunk her; divers he dispersed, which were taken after, and the rest he drove into the island of Tercera, which was then unassailable.' Camden continues the story. 'When the enemy's ships had got off safely to Tercera, Southampton and Vere attempted to crowd into the haven with great boats at mid-

night, and to cut the cables of the nearest ships, that they might be forced to sea by the gusts which blew from shore. But the Spaniards kept too strict a watch, and the project miscarried.'[1] After the English had taken and 'looted' the town of Villa Franca, the Spaniards finding that most of them had returned to their ships, made an attack in great force upon the remaining few. The Earls of Southampton and Essex stood almost alone, with a few friends, but these received the attack with such spirit that many of the Spaniards were slain, and the rest forced to retreat. On this occasion Southampton fought with such gallantry, that Essex in a burst of enthusiasm knighted his friend on the field, 'ere he could dry the sweat from his brows, or put his sword up in his scabbard.'

Sir William Monson, one of the admirals of the expedition, took a different view to that of Essex of what Southampton had done on this voyage. He considered that time had been lost in the chace, which might have been better employed. On his return to England Southampton found the Queen had adopted the opinion of Monson rather than that of Essex, and he had the mortification of being met with a frown of displeasure for having presumed to pursue and sink a ship without direct orders from his commander, instead of being welcomed with a smile for having done the only bit of warm work that was performed on the 'Island Voyage.' This was just like the earl's luck all through, after his fatal falling in love with Elizabeth Vernon. His intimacy with Essex was a secondary cause of his misfortunes.

The Queen often acted toward Essex in the spirit of that partial mother instanced by Fuller, who when her neglected son complained that his brother, her favourite, had hit and hurt him with a stone, whipped him for standing in the way of the stone which the brother had cast!

[1] *Camden's Elizabeth*, p. 598.

On this occasion the quarrels of Essex and Raleigh were visited on the head of Southampton. Fortune appeared to have an unappeasable spite against him; the world seemed bent upon thwarting his desires and crossing his deeds. Do what he might it was impossible for him to be in the right. There is little marvel that he grew of a turbulent spirit, or that his hot temper broke out in frequent quarrels; that he should wax more and more unsteady, much to the sorrow and chagrin of his mistress, who wept over the ill reports that she heard of his doings, and waited, hoping for the better days to come when he should pluck his rose[1] from the midst of the thorns, and wear it on his breast in peaceful joy.

In January, 1598, a disgraceful affair occurred in court which became the subject of common scandal. On the 19th of that month Rowland White writes:—'I *hard of some unkindness* should be between 3000 (the No. in his cypher for Southampton) *and his Mistress, occasioned by some report of Mr. Ambrose Willoughby.* 3000 called hym to an account for yt, but the matter was made knowen to my Lord of Essex, and my Lord Chamberlain, who had them in Examinacion; what the cause is I could not learne, for yt was but new; but *I see* 3000 *full of discontentments.*'[2] And on the 21st of January he says:—'The quarrel of my Lord Southampton to Ambrose Willoughby grew upon this: that he with Sir Walter Raleigh and Mr. Parker being at primero (a game of cards), in the Presence Chamber; the Queen was gone to bed, and he being there as Squire for the Body, desired them to give over. Soon after he spoke to them again, that if they would not leave he would call in the guard to pull down the board, which, Sir Walter Raleigh seeing, put up his

[1] For nothing this wide universe I call,
Save Thou, my Rose, in it thou art my all.
Sonnet 109.

[2] *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. ii. pp. 82-3.

money and went his ways. But my Lord Southampton took exceptions at him, and told him he would remember it; and so finding him between the Tennis Court wall and the garden shook him, and Willoughby pulled out some of his locks. The Queen gave Willoughby thanks for what he did in the Presence, and told him he had done better if he had sent him to the Porter's Lodge to see who durst have fetched him out.'[1]

The Earl also had a quarrel with Percy, Earl of Northumberland, which produced a challenge, and nearly ended in a duel. Percy sent copies of the papers to Mr. Bacon with a letter, in which he gives an account of the affair. The sole point of interest in this quarrel lies in the likelihood that *Touchstone*, in 'As you like it,' is aiming at it when he says:—'O, Sir; we quarrel in print by the book; as you have books for good manners. I will name you the degrees: the first, the retort courteous; the second, the quip modest; the third, the reply churlish; the fourth, the reproof valiant; the fifth, the counterbeck quarrelsome; the sixth, the lie with circumstance; the seventh, the lie direct. All these you may avoid but the lie direct; and you may avoid that too with an "If." I knew when seven justices could not take up a quarrel; but when the parties were met themselves, one of them thought but of an "*If*," as "*If*" you said *so*, then I said *so*; and they shook hands and swore brothers. Your *if* is the only peace-maker; much virtue in an *if*.'

We may find an illustration of 'the Percy's' temper in a letter of Mr. Chamberlain's to Mr. Winwood in 1613, which relates that Percy has, while in the Tower, beaten Ruthven, the Earl of Gowrie's brother, for *daring to cross his path in the garden*. So that when we read of Southampton's quarrels, it will only be fair to remember who are his fellows in fieryness. The Percy appears to have had his match, however, in his own wife, Dorothy

[1] *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. ii. pp. 82-3.

Devereux, the sister of Lady Rich and Robert Earl of Essex. In one of their domestic quarrels the Earl of Northumberland had said he would rather the King of Scots were buried than crowned, and that both he and all his friends would end their lives before her brother's great God should reign in his element. To which the lady spiritedly replied, that rather than any other save James should reign king of England she would eat their hearts in salt, though she were brought to the gallows immediately. [1]

In spite of his quarrels, the scuffle with Willoughby and the consequent scandals, the earl attended to his duty as a senator from October 24, 1597, till the end of the session, February 8, 1598. He also entered upon an engagement to accompany Mr. Secretary Cecil on an embassy to Paris. A few extracts from Rowland White's letters will continue the story.

January 14, 1598.—'I hear my Lord Southampton goes with Mr. Secretary to France, and so onward on his travels, which course of his doth extremely grieve his mistress, that passes her time in weeping and lamenting.'

January 28, 1598.—'My Lord Southampton is now at Court, who, for awhile, by her Majesty's command, did absent himself.'

January 30.—'My Lord Compton, my Lord Cobham, Sir Walter Raleigh, my Lord Southampton, do severally feast Mr. Secretary before he depart, and have plays and banquets.'

February 1.—'My Lord of Southampton is much troubled at her Majesty's strangest usage of him. Somebody hath played unfriendly parts with him. Mr. Secretary hath procured him licence to travel. *His fair mistress doth wash her fairest face with too many tears.*

[1] *Birch's Elizabeth*, vol. ii. p. 514. Perhaps Shakspeare had heard of this when he made Beatrice exclaim, 'O God, that I were a man! I would *eat his heart* in the market-place.'

I pray God his going away bring her to no such infirmity which is as it were hereditary to her name.'

February 2, 1598.—'It is secretly said that my Lord Southampton shall be married to his fair mistress.'

February 12.—'My Lord of Southampton is gone and hath left behind him a very desolate gentlewoman that hath almost wept out her fairest eyes. He was at Essex House with 1000 (Earl of Essex), and there had much private talk with him for two hours in the court below.'

On March 17, Cecil introduced his friend, at Angers, to Henry IV., telling that illustrious monarch that Lord Southampton 'was come with deliberation to do him service.' His Majesty received the earl with warm expressions of regard. Here again Southampton met with the customary frustration of his hopes; he had come for the express purpose of serving under so famous a commander, and was eager for the campaign, which was suddenly stopped by the peace of Vervins. There was nothing to be done except to have a look at Paris, and there he stayed some months.

July 15, 1598, Thomas Edmondes to Sir Robert Sidney writes :—'I send your lordship certain songs,[1] which were delivered me by my Lord Southampton to convey to your lordship from Cavelas. His lordship commendeth himself most kindly to you, and would have written to you if it had not been for a little slothfulness.'

The same writer fixes the time of the earl's return. He writes, November 2, 1598 :—'My Lord of Southampton that now goeth over can inform your lordship at large of the state of all things here.'[2]

But, according to Mr. Chamberlain's letter of August 30, 1598, the Earl of Southampton must have made a

[1] Very possibly some of the sonnets sent by Shakspeare to the earl in Paris. There were two familiar visitors at Sir Robert Sidney's house who were much interested in the sonnets of Shakspeare, viz., William Herbert and Lady Rich.

[2] *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. ii. pp. 102-4.

special journey from Paris for the purpose of effecting his marriage, and been on his way back when accompanied to Margate by Sir Thomas Germaine. Elizabeth Vernon had been compelled to retire from the Court. Chamberlain writes:—'Mistress Vernon is from the Court and lies at Essex House (at Wanstead, where the Earl of Essex was the fair Elizabeth's companion in disfavour). Some say she hath taken a *venue*[1] under her girdle, and swells upon it; yet she complains not of *foul play*, but says my Lord of Southampton will justify it, and it is bruited underhand that he was lately here four days in great secret of purpose to marry her, and effected it accordingly.' A week later the same writer says:—'Yesterday the Queen was informed of the new Lady of Southampton and her adventures, whereat her patience was so much moved that she came not to chapel. She threateneth them all to the Tower, not only the parties, but all that are partakers of the practice. It is confessed the earl was here, and solemnised the act himself, and Sir Thomas Germaine accompanied him on his return to Margate.' In his next letter Mr. Chamberlain says:—'I now understand that the Queen hath commanded the *novizia* countess the sweetest and best appointed lodging in the Fleet; her lord is by commandment to return upon his allegiance with all speed. These are but the beginnings of evil; well may he hope for that merry day on his deathbed, which I think he shall not find on his wedding couch.'[2] That the earl was also thrust into prison on his return we may infer from the words of Essex in

[1] *Venue* or venew. Steevens and Malone differed respecting this word, which occurs in 'Love's Labour's Lost.'

Armado. 'A sweet touch! a quick *venew* of wit!'

Steevens argued that it was the technical term for a *bout* or set-to at the fencing school. Malone held that it meant simply a *hit*. Douce maintained that *venew* and *bout* equally denote a *hit* in fencing. Mr. Chamberlain uses the word to signify a hit; the allusion is to being hit below the belt, which was, and is, reckoned a blow unfairly given.

[2] *S. P. O.*

his letter of July 11, 1599:—'Was it treason in my Lord of Southampton to marry my poor kinswoman, that neither long imprisonment nor any punishment besides that hath been usual in like cases can satisfy or appease? Or will no kind of punishment be fit for him but that which punisheth not him but me, this army, and this poor country Ireland?' When a young man marries, says an Arab adage, the demon utters a fearful cry. And Elizabeth seems to have been almost as profoundly affected on such occasions.

This fact of Southampton's love for Elizabeth Vernon, and the Queen's opposition to their marriage, is the chief point of interest in the earl's life, because it is one of the main facts in relation to the sonnets of Shakspeare. It is my conclusion that this pair of ill-starred lovers was badly treated by her Majesty. She not only rejected everything proposed by Essex for the advancement of his friend, but continued, as we shall see, the same spiteful policy when Lord Mountjoy wished to advance the fortunes of the earl in a wider sphere of action.

Southampton, Elizabeth Vernon, and their mutual friends, tried long and hard to obtain the Queen's consent to their marriage, but as she would not give it, and showed no signs of relenting, they did the very natural thing of getting married without it. This being done, what more is there to be said? It is unfair to talk of the earl being licentiously in love with Mistress Vernon when the Queen would not grant them the licence. The marriage certainly took place in one of the later months of 1598, and the bitterness of the Queen towards Southampton was thereby much increased. The Queen was jealous and enraged to find any of her favourites loving elsewhere, or sufficiently unloyal to her personal beauty to get married. It was so when Hatton, Leicester, and Essex married; but no one of them all was so virulently

pursued as the Earl of Southampton. Towards no one else was the fire of her anger kept so long aglow. It makes one fancy there must have been some feeling of animosity betwixt the two Elizabeths, which has not come to the surface.

In 1599 Essex was appointed Lord Deputy of Ireland, and Southampton accompanied him thither. On their arrival Essex made his friend General of Horse. By her Majesty's letter to Essex, July 19,[1] we learn that this was 'expressly forbidden' by the Queen, and 'it is therefore strange to us that you will dare thus to value your own pleasing, and think by your own private arguments to carry for your own glory a matter wherein *our pleasure to the contrary is made notorious.*' The Queen did not intend Southampton to be employed, and after some defensive pleadings Essex had to give him up. Before resigning his command he had done some little service. Sir J. Harington[2] gives us a glimpse of the earl's daring and dash in action. June 30, about three miles from Arklow, the army had to pass a ford. The enemy was ready to dispute or trouble the army in its passage. The Earl of Essex ordered Southampton to charge, the enemy having retired himself into his strength, a part of them casting away their arms for lightness. 'Then the Earl of Southampton tried to draw them on to firm ground, out of the bog and woodland, and at length he gathered up his troop, and seeing it lost time to endeavour to draw the vermin from their strength, resolved to charge them at all disadvantage, which was performed with that suddenness and resolution that the enemy which was before dispersed in skirmish had not time to put himself in order; so that by the opportunity of occasion taken by the earl, and virtue of them that were with him

[1] *S. P. O.* [2] *Nugæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. p. 287.

(which were almost all noble), there was made a notable slaughter of the rebels.' Here, too, we find fighting by Southampton's side a brother of Elizabeth Vernon, who managed to kill his man previous to his own horse going down in the bog and rolling a-top of him. The Earl of Southampton was such a leader of horse as could inspire the rebels with a salutary respect, and cause them to watch warily all his motions. It was in one of these skirmishes that the Lord Grey pursued a small body of the enemy in opposition to Southampton's orders. He was punished with a night's imprisonment, or rather, as Mr. Secretary Cecil explained in a letter to Sir H. Neville, 'the confinement was merely for order sake, Grey being a colonel, and Southampton a general.' But my Lord Grey took it as a personal affront, and brooded over it bitterly, seeking to make it a cause of quarrel.

The earl remained by the side of Essex some time after his command had been taken from him. He was present at a council of war held at the Castle of Dublin August 21, and was one of the chief men that accompanied Essex at his conference with Tyrone early in September, 1599, when a truce was concluded. We next hear of him in London by White's letter of October 11:—'My Lord Southampton and Lord Rutland came not to Court; the one doth but very seldom, they pass away the time in London *merely in going to plays* every day.[1] Southampton's sword had been struck from his hand, the Earl of Rutland had been recalled, as if the policy at Court was to lame Essex through his personal friends. Lord Grey, too, we find, is observed to be much discontented. His ill-feeling towards Southampton is smouldering, soon to break out in a desperate attack upon Southampton with drawn sword in open day and public street. He also challenged Southampton. Row-

[1] *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 132.

land White, January 24. 1600. tells his correspondent that Lord Grey hath sent the Earl of Southampton a challenge which 'I hear he answered thus—that he accepted it; but for the weapons and the place being by the laws of honour to be chosen by him, he would not prefer the combat in England, knowing the danger of the laws, and the little grace and mercy he was to expect if he ran into the danger of them. He therefore would let him know, ere it were long, what time, what weapon, and what place he would choose for it.' The violent temper and quarrelsome disposition of Southampton have been much dwelt upon. I repeat, it is only just that we should note the spirit of his personal opponents; and here we may recall the last words of Sir Charles Danvers on the scaffold. Amongst others present was the Lord Grey. Sir Charles asked pardon of him, and acknowledged he had been 'ill affected to him purely on the Earl of Southampton's account, *towards whom the Lord Grey professed absolute enmity.*'

In 1600 the Queen had neither forgotten nor forgiven the marriage of Southampton. Mountjoy was now made Lord-Deputy of Ireland, and Southampton hoped to accompany him in his first campaign. Again we have recourse to our agreeable court gossip, Rowland White:—

Jan. 24, 1600.—'My Lord of Southampton goes over to Ireland, having only the charge of 200 foot and 100 horse.' He was not permitted to accompany the Lord-Deputy to Ireland, and on February 9, we find that, 'My Lord of Southampton's going is uncertain, for it is thought that her Majesty allows it not.' Lord Mountjoy landed in Ireland February 26, and on March 15, White says:—'My Lord of Southampton is in very good hope to kiss the Queen's hand before his going into Ireland. Mr. Secretary is his good friend and he attends it; his horses and stuff are gone before.' March 22:—'My Lord of Southampton hath not yet kissed the Queen's hands, but

attends it still.' March 29:—'My Lord of Southampton attends to-morrow to kiss the Queen's hands; if he miss it, it is not like he shall obtain it in any reasonable time. I hear he will go to Ireland, and hopes by doing of some notable service to merit it at his return.' April 19:—'My Lord of Southampton deferred his departure for one week longer, hoping to have access to her Majesty's presence, but it cannot be obtained; yet she very graciously wished him a safe going and returning.' April 26:—'My Lord of Southampton went away on Monday last, Sir Charles Danvers brought him as far as Coventry.' May 3:—'My Lord Southampton upon his going away sent my Lord Grey word that what in his first letter he promised, he was now ready in Ireland to perform.'

On June 8, the Lord-Deputy wrote to Master Secretary concerning the state of Connaught, wherein nothing was surely the Queen's but Athlone by a provident guard, and Galway by their own good disposition, wishing that the government of that province might be conferred on the Earl of Southampton (to whom the Lord of Dunkellin would more willingly resign, and might do it with greater reputation to himself, in respect of the earl's greatness) rather than upon Sir Arthur Savage (who, notwithstanding, upon the Queen's pleasure again signified, was shortly after made governor of that province). His lordship protested that it was such a place as he knew the earl would not seek, but only himself desired this, because he knew the earl's aptness and willingness to do the Queen service, if he might receive such a token of her favour; justly commending his valour and wisdom, as well in general as in the late particular service in the Moyry, when the rear being left naked, he by a resolute charge with six horse upon Tyrone at the head of 220 horse, drove him back a musket shot, and so assuring the rear, saved the honour of the Queen's army.[1] It was as useless,

[1] *Moryson's History of Ireland*, book i. chap. 2, p. 173.

however, for Mountjoy to plead on behalf of Southampton as it had been for Essex in the previous year. Her Majesty was unrelenting. And in August, about the 25th, Southampton left the Irish war and sailed into England. There was some rumour of his going into the Low Countries in search of my Lord Grey; if so, nothing came of it. He is said to have been summoned home by Essex.

White tells us, September 26, 1600:—'The Earl of Southampton arrived upon Monday night, and upon Wednesday went to his lady who lies at Lees, my Lord Riches; he hath been extreme sick but is now recovered.'

Such treatment as Southampton had received from the Queen was materially calculated to drive him closer to the side of his friend Essex, who was then under the Queen's sore displeasure, brooding over his discontent. So far had her Majesty's petty tyranny been carried, that in the March of this year Lord and Lady Southampton, together with others of Essex's friends, had been all removed from Essex House; whilst great offence had been taken at Southampton and others having entered a house that overlooked York Garden, on purpose to salute Essex from the window.

The two earls were drawn together by many ties, by some likeness of nature, by strong bonds of personal friendship, and links of household love. Southampton was the nearest and dearest personal friend that Essex had; first in all matters of vital import and secret service. When Essex was consigned to the custody of the Lord Keeper in the autumn of 1599, his two most intimate and trusted friends were Southampton and Mountjoy; to these he committed the care of his interests. When Southampton, in April, 1600, went to join Lord Mountjoy in Ireland, Essex sent letters to Mountjoy saying he relied on him and Southampton as his best friends and would take their advice in all things. It was upon the intercession of Southampton, says Sir Henry Wotton, that the fatal tempter, Cuffe, was restored

to his place after Essex had dismissed him; and he 'so working upon his disgraces and upon the vain foundations of vulgar breath, which hurts many good men, spun out the final destruction of his master and himself, and almost of his restorer, if his pardon had not been won by inches.'

It was at Southampton's residence, Drury House—on the site of which now stands the Olympic Theatre—that the chief partisans of Essex held their meetings in January, 1601. And Southampton in his youthful zeal and fervent friendship seems to have felt that come what might it was his place to dwell with Essex in disgrace, and if need be, fall by his side in death. Though what the Essex conspiracy was formed for or amounted to it is very difficult to determine. Essex and his sister, Lady Rich, we know intrigued for the purpose of bringing James to the throne, but that was never put forward on this occasion.

Lord Mountjoy being under the influence of Lady Rich and held captive in her strong toils of grace, was to some extent bound up with the cause of Essex. His secretary tells us that he was privately professed and privy to the earl's intentions, though as these were so vague and full of change, the acquiescence of Mountjoy may have been very general. According to Sir Charles Danvers, Mountjoy had promised that if the King of Scots would head the revolution and strike for the throne of England, he would leave Ireland defensively guarded and come over with 5,000 or 6,000 men, 'which, with the party that my Lord of Essex should make head withal, were thought sufficient to bring to pass that which was intended.' He had afterwards advised the Earl of Essex to have patience and wait. Southampton had opposed this march on London. He held it altogether unfit as well in respect of his friend's conscience to God and his love to his country, as his duty to his sovereign, of which he, of all men, ought to have greatest regard, seeing her Majesty's favours to

him (Essex) had been so extraordinary, wherefore he, Southampton, could never give his consent to it.[1]

To me the attempt of Essex looks like a too audacious endeavour to apply, in a more public way, the rights of personal familiarity which he had in some sort acquired and so often relied on in private with the Queen. But the force and freedom of the personal were on the wane. Essex had shown disloyalty to her Majesty's person, which was more than disloyalty to her throne. He had said the 'Queen was cankered, and her mind had become as crooked as her carcase.' 'These words,' quoth Raleigh, 'cost the earl his head.' Also, there were statesmen round the throne who represented the public element, which was now rising in power as the life and vigour of the royal lioness were ebbing, and they were anxious that the personal fooling should cease, and the State policy be shaped less by whims and more by fixed principles. Else, according to Camden, the so-called conspirators were surprised to hear of a trial for treason. They had thought the matter would have been let sleep, and that the Queen's affection for Essex would cause it to be privately settled or kept in the dark.[2] No doubt there were some who stood about the earl and urged him on with desperate advice, that secretly nursed the wildest hopes of what a success might bring forth for them, who also calculated that the earl's influence with the Queen would tide them over a defeat.

Southampton had his personal complaint with regard to the attack made upon him in the street by Lord Grey, and to this he alluded in the course of the parleyings at Essex House before the surrender; but of course he knew this was no warrant for his being in arms against his sovereign. With him it was essentially a matter of personal friendship; he acted according to his sense of personal

[1] Examination of Southampton after his arraignment.
[2] *Camden's Elizabeth*, p. 622.

honour, which blinded him to all else. He had told Sir Charles Danvers that he would cast in his lot with my Lord of Essex, and venture his life to save him. He had done all that he possibly could on behalf of a man who had lost his head long before it fell from the block. He was one of those who in 1599 dissuaded Essex from one of his projected attempts, in which he purposed reducing his adversaries by force of arms. He opposed the contemplated march upon London. He advised the earl's escape into France, and offered to accompany him into exile and share his fortunes there. He, with Sir Charles Danvers, had, as Essex admitted, persuaded the rash earl to 'parley with my Lord General.' Evidently he had seen all the peril, but thought his place was with his friend, no matter what might be their fate. As he pleaded on his trial, the first cause of his part in the matter was that affinity betwixt him and Essex, 'being of his blood, and having married his kinswoman,' so that for his sake he would have hazarded his life. He had the good sense to see that the 'rising,' as it was called, the going into the city, was a foolish thing, and he said so, but he continued, 'My sword was not drawn all day.'[1]

He urged in his defence, 'What I have by my forwardness offended in act, I am altogether ignorant, but in thought I am assured never. If through my ignorance of law I have offended, I humbly submit myself to her Majesty, and from the bottom of my heart do beg her gracious pardon. For, if any foolish speeches have passed, I protest, as I shall be saved, that they were never purposed by me, nor understood to be so purposed, to the hurt of

[1] It was indeed foolish, for such a cause, and such a cry of revolution as '*For the Queen! For the Queen! My life is in danger!*' were never set up in this world before or since. Stowe informs us that the wondering citizens, not knowing what to make of the cry, fancied that it might be one of joy because Essex and the Queen had become friends again, and that Her Majesty had appointed him to ride through London in that triumphant manner.

her Majesty's person. I deny that I did ever mean or intend any treason, rebellion, or other action against my sovereign or the state; what I did was to assist my Lord of Essex in his private quarrel; and therefore, Mr. Attorney, you have urged the matter very far; my blood be upon your head. I submit myself to her Majesty's mercy. I know I have offended her, yet, if it please her to be merciful unto me I may live, and by my service deserve my life. I have been brought up under her Majesty. I have spent the best part of my patrimony in her Majesty's service, with danger of my life, as your lordships know.' Southampton was in his twenty-eighth year when he was tried for treason. He had espoused the Earl of Essex's cause unwarily, and followed him upon his fatal course imprudently. But there was something chivalrous in his self-sacrificing friendship; a spirit akin to that of the Scottish chieftain, who, when the Pretender made his personal appeal, saw all the danger, and said, 'You have determined, and we shall die for you;' and to death they went, proudly open-eyed.

The historian notes that when my Lord Grey was called at the trial, 'the Earl of Essex laughed upon the Earl of Southampton, and jogged him by the sleeve,' to call his attention to his old 'sweet enemy.'

Perhaps we shall get at the Earl of Southampton's view of the matter, in a letter written by Sir Dudley Carlton to Sir Thomas Parry, dated July 3, 1603; the remarkable words being spoken when and where there was no need for the speaker to 'hedge' on the subject:

'The Lords of Southampton and Grey, the first night the Queen came hither, renewed their old quarrels, and fell flatly out in her presence. She was in discourse with Lord Southampton touching the Lord of Essex' action, and wondered, as she said, so many great men did so little for themselves. To which Lord Southampton answered, that *the Queen being made a party against them*,

they were forced to yield, but if that course had not been taken, there was none of their private enemies, with whom their only quarrel was, that durst have opposed themselves. This being overheard by the Lord Grey, he would maintain the contrary party durst have done more than they. Upon which he had the lie hurled at him. The Queen bad them remember where they were.'[1] This was in vain. The bickering continued, and they had to be sent to their lodgings to which they were committed, with a guard placed over them. The King had to settle the quarrel, and make peace between them.

Southampton was condemned to die, and lay in the Tower at point of death; he was long doubtful whether his life would be spared. His friends outside hoped for the best, but sadly feared the worst. In a letter to Sir George Carew, dated March 4, 1601, Secretary Cecil professes to be pleading all he dare, for the 'poor young Earl of Southampton, who, merely for the love of Essex, hath been drawn into this action.' He says that he hardly finds cause to hope. It is 'so much against the earl that the meetings were held at Drury House, where he was the chief, that those who deal for him are much disadvantaged of arguments to save him.' Yet 'the Queen is so merciful, and the earl so penitent, and he never in thought or deed offended save in this conspiracy,' that the Secretary will not despair. At length the sentence was commuted to perpetual imprisonment.

At the death of the Queen the earl was much visited, says Bacon, who was one of the first to greet him, and who wrote to assure his lordship that, how little soever it might seem credible to him at first (he having been counsel against Southampton and Essex on their trial), yet it was as true as a thing that God knoweth, that this great change of the Queen's death, and the King's accession, had wrought in himself no other change to-

[1] *Nicholls's Progresses of James I.*

wards his lordship than this, that he might safely be that to him now, which he was truly before.[1] We may rest assured that Shakspeare was one of the first to greet his 'dear boy,' over whose errors he had grieved, and upon whose imprudent unselfishness he had looked with tears, half of sorrow, and half of pride. He had loved him as a father loves a son; he had warned him, and prayed for him, and fought in soul against 'Fortune' on his behalf, and he now welcomed him from the gloom of a prison on his way to a palace and the smile of a monarch. This was the poet's written gratulation:

> Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
> Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,
> Can yet the lease of my true love control;
> Supposed as forfeit to a Confined Doom!
> The Mortal Moon hath her Eclipse endured,
> And the sad Augurs mock their own presage,
> Uncertainties now crown themselves assured,
> And Peace proclaims Olives of endless age.
> Now with the drops of this most balmy time
> My love looks fresh; and Death to me subscribes,
> Since, spite of him, I'll live in this poor rhyme,
> While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes.
> And thou in this shalt find thy Monument
> When Tyrants' crests and Tombs of Brass are spent.

Mr. Chamberlain, writing to Dudley Carleton, April 1603, says, 'The 10th of this month the Earl of Southampton was delivered out of the Tower by warrant from the King,' sent by Lord Kinloss—'These bountiful beginnings raise all men's spirits, and put them in great hopes.' Wilson says,[2] 'The Earl of Southampton, covered long with the ashes of great Essex his ruins, was sent for from the Tower, and the King looked upon him with a smiling countenance, though displeasing happily to the

[1] *Birch's Elizabeth*, vol. ii. p. 500.
[2] *History of England*, vol. ii. p. 663.

new Baron Essingdon, Sir Robert Cecil, yet it was much more to the Lords Cobham and Grey, and Sir Walter Raleigh.'

Shakspeare's was not the only poetic greeting received by the earl as he emerged from the Tower. Samuel Daniel hastened to salute him, and give voice to the general joy:

> The world had never taken so full note
> Of what thou art, hadst thou not been undone;
> And only thy affliction hath begot
> More fame, than thy best fortunes could have won:
> For, ever by Adversity are wrought
> The greatest works of Admiration;
> And all the fair examples of Renown
> Out of distress and misery are grown.
>
> How could we know that thou wouldst have endured
> With a reposèd cheer, wrong and disgrace;
> And, with a heart and countenance assured,
> Have looked stern Death and Horror in the face!
> How should we know thy soul had been secured
> In honest counsels, and in way unbase;
> Hadst thou not stood to show us what thou wert
> By thy affliction that descryed thy heart.

John Davies of Hereford also addressed the earl on his liberation, and grew jubilant over the rising dawn of the new reign, opening on the land with such a smiling prospect:

> The time for mirth is now, even now, begun;
> Now wisest men with mirth do seem stark mad,
> And cannot choose—their hearts are all so glad.
> Then let's be merry in our God and King,
> That made us merry, being ill bestadd:
> Southampton, up thy Cap to Heaven fling,
> And on the Viol there sweet praises sing;
> For he is come that grace to all doth bring.

Southampton was invited to meet the King on his way

to London. In Nicholls's 'Progresses of James I.'[1] we read, that 'Within half a mile of Master Oliver Cromwell's (*our* Oliver's uncle), the Bailiff of Huntingdon met the King, and there delivered the sword, which his Highness gave to the new-released Earl of Southampton, to bear before him. O admirable work of mercy, confirming the hearts of all true subjects in the good opinion of his Majesty's royal compassion; not alone to deliver from captivity such high nobility, but to use vulgarly with great favour, not only him, but also the children of his late honourable fellows in distress. His Majesty passed on in state, the earl bearing the sword before him, as I before said he was appointed, to Master Oliver Cromwell's house.'

His lands and other rights, which had been forfeited by the earl's attainder, were now restored, with added honours and increase of wealth. He was appointed Master of the Game to the Queen, and a pension of 600*l.* per annum was conferred upon his countess. He was also installed a Knight of the Garter, and made Captain of the Isle of Wight. By a new patent, dated July 21, he was again created earl by his former titles. And the first bill after the recognition of the King, which was read in the parliament that met on the 19th of March, 1604, was for restitution of Henry, Earl of Southampton. On the 4th of this month, Rowland White writes, 'My Lady Southampton was brought to bed of a young lord upon St. David's day (March 1), in the morning; a saint to be much honoured by that house for so great a blessing, by wearing a leek for ever upon that day.'[2] On the 27th of the same month the child was christened at Court, 'the King and Lord Cranbourn with the Countess of Suffolk being gossips.' March 30 the earl was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, together with his friend the Earl of Devonshire. These marks of favour were fol-

[1] Vol. i. p. 98. [2] *Sydney Memoirs.*

lowed, in June, 1606, by the appointment of his lordship to be Warden of the New Forest (on the death of the Earl of Devonshire), and Keeper of the Park of Lindhurst. In November, 1607, the earl lost his mother, who had been the wife successively of Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, Sir Thomas Heneage, and Sir William Hervey. We are told that she 'left the *best of her stuff to her son*, and the greater part to her husband.' The 'stuff' consisted of jewellery, pictures, hangings, &c., chiefly collected by Sir Thomas Heneage, for the possession of which the Earl of Arundel ranked him among the damned.

The Earl of Southampton was a very intimate friend of the Earl of Pembroke, and both, like the sage Roger Ascham, were sadly addicted to cock-fighting. Rowland White records, on the 19th of April, 1605, that 'Pembroke hath made a cock-match with Suffolk and Southampton, for 50*l.* a battle;' and May 13 he says, or rather sings:—

> The Herberts, every cockpit day,
> Do carry away
> The gold and glory of the day.

This fellowship in sport led to the quarrel with Lord Montgomery, recorded in Winwood's Memorials.[1] Southampton and the wild brother of the Earl of Pembroke fell out, as they were playing at tennis, in April, 1610, when and 'where the rackets flew about their ears, but the matter was compounded by the King without further bloodshed.'

The two earls, Southampton and Pembroke, were yoked in a nobler fellowship than that of sport. They fought side by side in the uphill struggle which colonisation had to make against Spanish influence. They carried on the work of Raleigh when his adventurous spirit beat its wings in vain behind the prison bars, and continued it

[1] Vol. iii. p. 154.

after his grey head had fallen on Tower Hill. They both belonged to the Company of Adventurers and Planters of the City of London for the first colony of Virginia (May 23, 1609): Southampton being appointed one of the council. He became a most active promoter of voyages of discovery, and a vigilant watcher over the interests of the colonists. December 15, 1609, the earl writes to Lord Salisbury, that he has told the King about the Virginian squirrels brought into England, which are said to fly. The King very earnestly asked if none were provided for him, and whether Salisbury had none for him, and said he was sure Salisbury would get him one. The earl says he would not have troubled Lord Salisbury on the subject, '*but that you know so well how he is affected to these toys.*' A squirrel that could fly being of infinitely more interest to James than a colony that could hardly stand alone.

In 1607 Southampton and Sir Ferdinando Gorges had sent out two ships, under the command of Harlie and Nicolas. They sailed along the coast of New England, and were sometimes well but oftener ill received by the natives. They returned to England in the same year, bringing five savages back with them. One wonders whether Shakspeare's rich appreciation of such a 'find' had not something to do with his discovery of Caliban, the man-monster.

It is pretty certain that the earl's adventures as a colonizer had a considerable influence on the creation of Shakspeare's 'Tempest.' The marvellous stories told of 'Somers' Island,' called the Wonderful Island, for the plantation of which a charter was granted to Southampton, Herbert, and others, may have fired the poet's imagination and tickled his humour.

August, 1612, the English merchants sent home some ambergris and seed pearls, 'which the devils of the Bermudas love not better to retain than the angels of Castile do to recover.'

October 27, 1613, a piece of ambergris was found, 'big as the body of a giant, the head and one arm wanting; but so foolishly handled that it brake in pieces, so that the largest piece brought home was not more than 68 ounces in weight.' Again, we read that the Spaniards, dismayed at the frequency of hurricanes, durst not adventure there, but called it *Dæmoniorum insulam.*

On the 12th of May, 1614, the Earl of Southampton supported the cause of his young plantation in Parliament, on which occasion Dick Martin, in upholding the Virginian colony, so attacked and abused the House that he was had up to the bar to make submission. Sir Thomas Gates had just come from Virginia, and reported that the plantation must fall to the ground, if it were not presently helped.

The earl lived to see the colony founded and flourishing. In 1616 Virginia was reported by Sir Thomas Dale to be 'one of the goodliest and richest kingdoms in the world, which being inhabited by the King's subjects, will put such a bit into our ancient enemy's mouth as will curb his haughtiness of monarchy.' And in 1624, the year of the earl's death, the colony was so far thriving that it had 'worn out the scars of the last massacre,' and was only pleading for a fresh supply of powder. The good work was crowned. 'The noble and glorious work of Virginia,' as it was called by Captain Bargrave, whose estate had been ruined in its support, and his life afterwards dedicated to the 'seeing of it effected.'

The earl of Southampton has left his mark on the American map; his name will be found in various parts of Virginia. Southampton Hundred is so called after his title; and the Hampton Roads, where President Lincoln met the envoys from the South, to broach terms of reconciliation and peace, were so named after the friend and patron of Shakspeare.

Our American friends were oblivious of much that was stirring in the mother's memory, when the heart of

England thrilled to the deeds done by Virginians in the late civil wars. In spite of her face being set sternly against slavery, she could not stifle the cry of race, and the instinct of nature,—could not but remember that these were the descendants of her heroic adventurers, the hardy pioneers of her march round the globe, who laid down their weary bones when their work was done, and slept in the valleys of old Virginia, to leave a living voice that cries from the mountains and the waters with the voice of her own blood, and in the words of her own tongue.

As the friend of Essex, whom King James delighted to honour, the Earl of Southampton received many marks of royal favour, although he was not one who was naturally at home in such a court. On June 4, 1610, he acted as carver at the splendid festival which was given in honour of young Henry's assumption of the title of Prince of Wales. In 1613 he entertained the King at his house in the New Forest. A letter written by him to Sir Ralph Winwood,[1] August 6, 1613, gives us a glimpse of his feelings at the time. He was one of the friends chosen to act on the part of Essex' son Robert, in the matter of devising the means of a divorce. And he writes with evident disgust at the conduct of affairs: 'Of the Nullity I see you have heard as much as I can write; by which you may discern the power of a King with Judges, for of those which are now for it, I knew some of them, when I was in England, were vehemently against it. I stay here only for a wind, and purpose (God willing) to take the first for England; though, till things be otherwise settled, I could be as well pleased to be anywhere else; but the King's coming to my House imposeth a necessity at this time upon me of returning.' In 1614, he made a visit to the Low Countries, and was with Lord Herbert of Cherbury at the siege of Rees, in the duchy of Cleves. In 1617, Southampton accompanied James on his visit to

[1] *Winwood Memorials*, vol. iii. p. 475.

Scotland. And, from a letter of the earl's to Carleton, April 13, 1619, we learn that he has been chosen a privy councillor. He remarks, that he will rather observe his oath by keeping counsel than giving it; much is not to be expected from one 'vulgar councillor,' but he will strive to do no hurt. It is said that he had long coveted this honour. June 30, 1613, the Rev. Thos. Larkin, writing to Sir Thos. Puckering, had said:— 'My Lord of Southampton hath lately got licence to make a voyage over the Spa, whither he is either already gone, or means to go very shortly. He pretends to take remedy against I know not what malady; but his greatest sickness is supposed to be a discontentment conceived that he cannot compass to be made one of the Privy Council; which not able to brook here well at home, he will try if he can better digest it abroad.'

If he had looked up to this as the consummation of his wishes, he could have found but little satisfaction, and no benefit, from it when realised. He was unable from principle to acquiesce in the measures of the Court. Those who had kept the Council Chamber closed against him for so long had by far the truer instinct. He is spoken of by Wilson as one of the few gallant spirits, that aimed at the public liberty more than their own personal interests or the smiles of Court favour. This writer says[1]:— 'Southampton, tho' he were one of the King's Privy Council, yet was he no great Courtier. Salisbury kept him at a bay, and pinched him so, by reason of his relation to old Essex, that he never flourished much in his time; nor was his spirit (after him) so smooth shod as to go always at the Court pace, but that now and then he would make a carrier that was not very acceptable to them, for he carried his business closely and slily, and was rather an adviser than an actor.'

[1] *Life and Reign of King James I.*, p. 736.

He now joined the small party that was in opposition to the Court, his ardent temperament often kindling into words, which were as scattered sparks of fire in inflaming the little band that thwarted the meaner and baser wishes of the King and his ministers. Contrary to the desire of Government, he was chosen Treasurer of the Virginia Company. Also, in parliament, he stood forward to withstand the unconstitutional views of ministers and favourites. Early in the year 1621 he made a successful motion against illegal patents; and Camden mentions that during the sitting of the 14th of March 'there was some quarrelling between the Marquis of Buckingham, and Southampton and Sheffield, who had interrupted him, for repeating the same thing over and over again, and that contrary to received approved order in parliament.'

The Prince of Wales tried to reconcile them. Buckingham, however, was not the man to forget or forgive an affront. And those on whom he fixed his eye in enmity sooner or later felt the arm of his power, although the blow was at times very secretly dealt. Twelve days after the parliament had adjourned, Southampton was committed to the custody of the Dean of Westminster, to be allowed no intercourse with any other than his keeper (Sir Richard Weston). June 23, Sir Richard Weston declined to be the earl's keeper, and Sir W. Parkhurst was appointed.

The Rev. Joseph Mead writes to Sir Martin Stutville, June 30 of this year:—'It is said that this week the Countess of Southampton, assisted by some two more countesses, put up a petition to the King, that her lord might answer before himself; which, they say, his Majesty granted.'[1]

Various others were imprisoned, about the same time, for speaking idle words. Among the rest, John Selden was committed to the keeping of the Sheriff of London; he

[1] *Court and Times of James*, vol. ii. p. 263.

was also set at liberty, on the same day as the Earl of Southampton, July 18, 1621. In a letter of proud submission sent to the Lord Keeper Williams, Southampton promises to 'speak as little as he can,' and 'meddle as little as he can,' according to '*that part* of my Lord Buckingham's advice!' In these stormy discussions and early grapplings with irresponsible power, we hear the first mutterings of the coming storm that was to sweep thro' England, and feel that, in men like Southampton, the spirit was stirring which was yet to spring up, full-statured and armed, for the overthrow of weak prince and fatal parasites, to stand at last as a dread avenger flushed with triumph, smiling a stern smile by the block at Whitehall. His imprisonment did not repress Southampton's energies or lessen his activity. In the new parliament, which assembled on the 9th of February, 1624, he was on the committee for considering of the defence of Ireland; the committee for stopping the exportation of money; the committee for the making of arms more serviceable. He was a true exponent of the waking nation, in its feeling of animosity against Spain, and of disgust at the pusillanimous conduct of James, who would have tamely submitted to see his son-in-law deprived of the Palatinate. The aroused spirit of the nation having compelled the King to enter into a treaty with the States-General, granting them permission to raise four regiments in this country, Southampton obtained the command of one of them. 'This spring,' says Wilson, 'gave birth to four brave Regiments of Foot (a new apparition in the English horizon), fifteen hundred in a Regiment, which were raised and transported into Holland (to join the army under Prince Maurice) under four gallant colonels: the Earl of Oxford, the Earl of Southampton, the Earl of Essex, and the Lord Willoughby.' This was a fatal journey for the Earl, the last of his wanderings, that was to bring him the 'so long impossible Rest.' 'The

winter quarter at Rosendale,' Wilson writes, 'was also fatal to the Earl of Southampton, and the Lord Wriothesley his son. Being both sick there together of burning fevers, the violence of which distemper wrought most vigorously upon the heat of youth, overcoming the son first; and the drooping father, having overcome the fever, departed from Rosendale with an intention to bring his son's body into England, but at Berghen-op-Zoom he *died of a lethargy*, in the view and presence of the relator.' The dead son and father were both brought in a small bark to England, and landed at Southampton; both were buried at Titchfield, on Innocents' day, 1624.

'They were both poisoned by the Duke of Buckingham,' says Sir Edward Peyton, in his 'Catastrophe of the House of the Stuarts' (p. 360), as plainly appears, he adds, 'by the relation of Doctor Eglisham.' This relation of Eglisham's will be found in the 'Forerunner of Revenge.'[1] The doctor was one of King James's physicians for ten years. His statement amounts to this—that the Earl of Southampton's name was one of those which were on a roll that was found in King Street, Westminster, containing a list of those who were to be removed out of Buckingham's way. Also, that when the physicians were standing round the awfully disfigured body of the dead Marquis of Hamilton (another supposed victim of Buckingham's), one of them remarked, that 'my Lord Southampton was blistered all within the breast, as my Lord Marquis was.'

This statement made me curious enough to examine Francis Glisson's report of the *post mortem* examination of the Earl of Southampton's body: it is in the British Museum;[2] and I found it to be so suspiciously reticent, that the silence is far more suggestive than what is said. It contains no mention whatever of the condition of the blood

[1] Harleian Miscellany, vol. ii. pp. 72-7.
[2] Vide Ayscough's catalogue of MS.

or the brain, the spleen or bowels, the heart or liver, the stomach or lungs. The bladder and kidneys are the only parts described. An altogether unsatisfactory report, that looks as though it were a case of suppressed evidence. This, coupled with the *lethargy* noticed by Wilson, and the known implacable enmity of Buckingham, does at least give colour to the statements of Sir Edward Peyton, and Dr. Eglisham. But for us it will remain one of the many secrets—for which John Felton, 'with a wild flash in the dark heart of him,' probed swiftly and deeply with his avenging knife,—to be known hereafter.

One cannot but feel that the Earl of Southampton did not get adequate scope for his energies under James any more than in the previous reign, and that he should have lived a few years later, for his orb to have come full circle. He might have been the Rupert of Cromwell's horsemen. He was not a great man, nor remarkably wise, but he was brave, frank, magnanimous, thoroughly honourable, a true lover of his country, and the possessor of such natural qualities as won the love of Shakspeare. A comely noble of nature, with highly finished manners; a soldier, whose personal valour was proverbial; a lover of letters, and a munificent patron of literary men.

Chapman, in one of his dedicatory sonnets prefaced to the Iliad, calls the Earl 'learned,' and proclaims him to be the 'choice of all our country's noble spirits.' Richard Braithwaite inscribes his 'Survey of History, or a Nursery for Gentry,' to Southampton, and terms him 'Learning's select Favourite.' Nash calls him 'a dear lover and cherisher, as well of the lovers of poets as of poets themselves.' Florio tells us that he lived for many years in the earl's pay, and terms him the 'pearl of peers.' He relieved the distress of Minshew, author of the 'Guide to Tongues.' Barnaby Barnes addressed a sonnet to him, in 1593, in which he expressed a hope that his verses 'if graced by that heavenly countenance which gives

light to the Muses, may be shielded from the poisoned shafts of envy.' Jervais Markham, in a sonnet attached to his poem on the death of Sir Richard Grenville, addresses Southampton thus:—

Thou, the laurel of the Muses hill,
Whose eyes doth crown the most victorious pen.[1]

Wither appears to have had some intention of celebrating the earl's marked virtues and nobility of character as exceptionally estimable in his time, for, in presenting him with a copy of his 'Abuses stript and whipt,' he tells him,—

I ought to be no stranger to thy worth,
Nor let thy virtues in oblivion sleep:
Nor will I, if my fortunes give me time.

In the year 1621, the earl had not ceased his patronage of literary men, as is shown by the dedication to him of Thomas Wright's 'Passions of the mind in general.'

Many elegies were sung over the death of Southampton, of which the following, by Sir John Beaumont, is the best:—

I will be bold my trembling voice to try,
That his dear name in silence may not die;
The world must pardon if my song be weak,
In such a cause it is enough to speak.
Who knew not brave Southampton, in whose sight
Most placed their day, and in his absence night?
When he was young, no ornament of youth
Was wanting in him, acting that in truth
Which Cyrus did in shadow; and to men
Appeared like Peleus' son from Chiron's den:
While through this island Fame his praise reports,
As best in martial deeds and courtly sports.
When riper age with winged feet repairs,
Grave care adorns his head with silver hairs;
His valiant fervour was not then decayed,
But joined with counsel as a further aid.

[1] It has been suggested that Markham here alludes to the Earl's patronage of Shakspeare.

Behold his constant and undaunted eye,
In greatest danger, when condemned to die!
He scorns the insulting adversary's breath,
And will admit no fear, though near to death.
When shall we in this realm a Father find
So truly sweet, or Husband half so kind?
Thus he enjoyed the best contents of life,
Obedient children, and a loving wife.
These were his parts in peace; but, O, how far
This noble soul excelled itself in war.
He was directed by a natural vein,
True honour by this painful way to gain.
I keep that glory last which is the best,
The love of learning, which he oft expressed
In conversation, and respect to those
Who had a name in arts, in verse, or prose.

His countess survived the earl for many years, and died in 1640.

Walpole, in his Anecdotes of Painting, mentions a portrait, half-length, of Elizabeth Vernon, as being at Sherburn Castle, Dorsetshire. It is by Cornelius Jansen, who was patronized by the Earl of Southampton,[1] and may thus have drawn the portrait of Shakspeare. This picture, says Walpole, is equal to anything the master executed. The clothes are magnificent, and the attire of her head is singular, a veil turned quite back. The face and hands are coloured with incomparable lustre. There is also an authentic portrait of this lady, in good preservation, at Hodnet Hall, which represents her as a type of a beauty in the time of Elizabeth. Her dress is a brocade in brown and gold, her ribbons are scarlet and gold, her ruff and

[1] Peachum, in his 'Graphice, or the most Ancient and Excellent Art of Drawing and Limning,' says, the Earls of Southampton and Pembroke were amongst the chief patrons of painting in England.

N.B.—In the footnote p. 220 of Walpole's Anecdotes of Painting in England, Mr. Dallaway speaks wrongly of this work as being first published in 1634. The first edition, a copy of which is in the British Museum, was published in 1612.

deep sleeve cuffs are of point lace, her ornaments of coral; her hair is light, and her complexion fresh, vivid, auroral, having clearly that war of the red rose and the white described by Shakspeare in his 99th sonnet. The hair is suggestive, too, of the singular comparison used in that sonnet of 'buds of marjoram,' not in colour, but in shape. Supposing the lady was accustomed at times to leave a portion of it rather short, to be worn in front of the head-dress, or veil that swept backward, the ends would *crisp* and *bunch* themselves into a likeness of the little clusters of marjoram buds. Indeed, the shape of the head of hair, dressed superbly as it is, is not unlike a bush of marjoram in the *spread* of it!

An engraving by Thompson, from a portrait by Vandyke, a copy of which is in the British Museum, shows Lady Southampton to have been tall and graceful, with a fine head and thoughtful face; the long hair is softly waved with light and shadow, and the look has a touch of languor, different to the Hodnet Hall picture, but this last may be only a Vandyke grace.

It is pleasant to remember that from this much-tried pair, in whom Shakspeare took so affectionate an interest, sprang one of the most glorious of Englishwomen, one of the pure white lilies of all womanhood! This was the Lady Russell, whose spirit rose so heroically to breast the waves of calamity; whose face was as an angel's shining through the gathering shadows of death, with a look of lofty cheer, to hearten her husband on his way to the scaffold; almost personifying, in her great love, the good Providence that had given to him so precious a spirit for a companion, so exalted a woman to be his wife! This lady was the grand-daughter of the Earl and Countess of Southampton. She was daughter of Thomas Wriothesley, who was called the Virtuous Lord Treasurer of Charles II., by his first wife, daughter of Henry de Massey, Baron de Rouvigni, a French Protestant noble.

POET AND PATRON:

THEIR PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP.

THE Earl of Southampton cannot be to us what he was to Shakspeare, and time has almost effaced him from the national memory; he has nearly passed out of sight in that cloud of dust created by the fall of Essex. Yet, for our great poet's sake, no one can help taking an interest in his story, or in his friendship, of which the Sonnets are the fruit; and the more we draw near to read his character aright, the greater reason we shall find to love him for what he once was to Shakspeare. There was a time in our poet's life when the patronage of Southampton, as it was described by Barnes, shone like a splendid shield in the eyes of envious rivals, and such a dazzling defence must have tended to lessen the yelpings of the pack that was at him in full cry about the year 1592. In all likelihood the earl was one, and the chief one, of those 'divers of worship,' who, according to Chettle, had reported so favourably of the poet's private character and dramatic ability. And, although not intended as an autobiographic record, the Sonnets sufficiently show that the friendship of the earl was the source of many comforting and loving thoughts, which cherished and illumed his inner life, when the outer day may have been somewhat desolate and drear. The 25th sonnet tells us how

Shakspeare congratulated himself on having secured such a friend, whose heart was larger than his fortunes, whose hand was liberal as his thought was generous, and whose kindly regard placed the poet far above the 'favourites of great princes.' What truth there may be in the tradition that the earl gave Shakspeare a thousand pounds at one time we cannot know; it may have resulted from the fact that he had given the poet as much at various times. There can be no question, however, that he did him sundry good turns, and gave help of many kinds; if required, money would be included; this too, when the poet most needed help, to hearten him in his life-struggle, while he was working at the basis of his character and the foundations of his fortune and his fame. It would be a kind of breakwater influence, when the poet was fighting with wind and wave for every bit of foothold on firm ground.

Shakspeare would likewise be indebted to his noble friend for many a glimpse of Court life and Court manners, many an insight into personal character, through this chance of seeing the personal characteristics that would otherwise have been veiled from him. His friend the earl would lift the curtain for him, and let him peep behind the scenes which were draped to the vulgar.

It was a wonderful time for such a dramatist. Men and women played more personal parts, exerted more personal influence, and revealed more of their personal nature. The inner man got more direct manifestation. Shakspeare saw the spirits of men and women, as it were, in habitations of glass, sensitive to every light and shadow, and showing how the changes passed over them, by the glow or the gloom that followed. Now-a-days, we are shut up in houses of stone, iron-fenced by manners and customs and the growths of time, that have accumulated between man and man, putting them farther and farther apart, until a good deal of the Elizabethian nearness of life is gone for public men. We have lost much of that

element, which has been described as the real source of genius, the spirit of boyhood carried into manhood, which the Elizabethans had, and showed it in their friendships and their fighting, their passions and their play. We are more shut up, and only peep at one another, we reveal the smallest possible part of ourselves. The Elizabethans had more naked nature for Shakspeare to draw; he was as fortunate in the habits of his time as the Greek sculptors were in the freedom of the Greek dress. He would not have made nearly so much out of us, had he lived in our day, because so much would not have been revealed in public. He would not be able to see the most characteristic things, the best and the worst saying out their utmost, known by name, and visible at their work. The personality which Shakspeare saw and seized, would now be lessened till almost invisible, in the increasing crowd of life, and conflict of circumstances, and change of things. He would only be able to read about such as those whom he saw and knew in daily life. He would now see no sight like that of Drake at bowls on Plymouth Hoe; or Raleigh smoking his pipe with his peasants, and making their eyes glitter with the mirage of a land of gold; a Lord Grey rushing at Southampton in the street, with his sword drawn; noble grey heads going to the block after a life of service for their country; Essex and her Majesty exhibiting in public the pets and passions of the nursery; or the Queen showing her leg to an ambassador and boxing the ears of a favourite; or a player who, like Tarleton, dared to abuse the favourite Leicester, present with the Queen, and who 'played the God Luz, with a flitch of bacon at his back; and the Queen bade them take away the knave for making her to laugh so excessively, as he fought against her little dog Perrico de Faldas, with his sword and longstaff, and bade the Queen take off her mastiff.'[1] That was a time in which character was

[1] Scrap of paper in the State Paper Office, 1588. Calendar of State Papers, Elizabeth, 1581-1590, p. 541.

brought closer home to the dramatist. And the Earl of Southampton's friendship was a means of introducing our poet to characters that must otherwise have remained out of reach. In this way he was enabled to make a close study of Southampton's friends, including persons like Essex and Montjoy, and one of the most remarkable characters of that time, one of the most unique samples of human nature, the Lady Rich, in whose person I think the poet saw several of his creations in outline, and whose influence warmed his imagination and gave colour to the complexion of his earlier women. Many a hint of foreign scenes would he catch from those who had travelled, and could describe; men who in our time would perhaps put their experience into books, and many a heroic trait from the silent fighting men, who had done what they could not put into words. Looking over the shoulder of his noble friend, Shakspeare could thus see some of the best things that the life of his time had to show, and take his mental pictures with his instantaneous quickness of impression, for he had the chameleon-like spirit that could catch its colour from the air he breathed, and in the Earl of Southampton's company he must often have breathed an air that 'sweetly crept' into the study of his imagination, brightening and enriching his mind, and making its images of life come to him 'apparelled in more precious habit,' more 'moving delicate,' especially in the shape of the exquisite fragrant-natured English ladies who became his Mirandas, Perditas, Imogenes, and Hermiones.

It has been assumed that these sonnets of Shakspeare do but represent a form of sonneteering adulation common to the time. As though they were the poetic coin wherewith the poet sought to repay the patron for his munificent gifts. Nothing could be farther from the fact. They contain no flattery whatever. So far as they are personal to Shakspeare they come warm from his own sincere heart, and are vital with his own affectionate

feeling for the brave and bounteous peer to whom he publicly dedicated 'love without end,' and for whom he meant to make a wreath of immortal flower which had its mortal rootage in the poet's own life. Such a celebration of personal friendship as occurs in these sonnets was not common as some writers have supposed. In fact it has no parallel in the Elizabethan time. And such a friendship was as rare as is this celebration of it.

Looking backward over the two centuries and a half, and seeing the halo of glory on the brow of the dead Past, it seems that the personal friendship of man and man was a more possible and noble thing with the Elizabethan men. Perhaps it is partly owing to the natural touch of Time in the composition of his historic pictures; to the softened outline and mellowing tint. But those Elizabethans have a way of coming home to us with more of the nearness of brotherhood; they are like a band of brothers with a touch of noble boyhood about their ways, and on their faces a light of the golden age. They make it possible to our hard national nature that the love of man to man may be at times 'passing the love of woman.' But such an example of personal friendship as that of Shakspeare the player and Southampton the peer stands absolutely alone; there is nothing like it.

We are apt to think of Shakspeare as the great master-spirit, who was fit to be the friend of the noblest by birth, and the kingliest by nature. Those who knew him, we fancy, would be more likely to think of the Scripture text, that reminds us not to be forgetful of entertaining strangers, for they may be the angels of God in disguise, rather than to be troubled with thoughts and suggestions of his being only a poor player. But the age in which he lived, and in which this friendship was engendered, was a time when the distinctions of rank and the boundary lines of classes were so precisely observed that even the particular style and quality of dress were imposed according to the

wearer's position in life. Therefore the feeling of personal friendship must have been very strong in these two men, to have so far obliterated the social landmarks, and made their remarkable intimacy possible.

I think the 25th sonnet tells us plainly enough, that the young earl first sought out the poet, and conferred on him an unexpected honour; a joy unlooked-for. This view is most in keeping with the two personal characters. Then the frank-hearted, free-handed young noble soon found that his advances were amply repaid. And he had the insight to see that here was a noble of nature, with something in him which towered over all social distinctions. On his side, the poet would warmly appreciate the open generous disposition of the earl, who, whatever else he lacked, had the genius to make himself beloved. Shakspeare was that natural gentleman, who could preserve exactly the distance at which the attraction is magnetically perfect, and most powerfully felt; thus the acquaintanceship soon grew into a friendship of the nearest and dearest possible between Shakspeare, the man of large and sweet affections, and the comely good-natured youth, who had the intuition to discover the poet, and was drawn lovingly towards the man. Of the depth of the personal affection, and the inward nature of the friendship, there is the most abundant proof. The dedicatory epistle to his poem of 'Lucrece' breathes the most cheery assurance, and publicly alludes to a private history that has never before been understood, but which will now serve to show how close were the personalities, how secret the relationship of Southampton and Shakspeare. Then we have the letter of Lord Southampton, which I, for one, feel to be a genuine document; and, as regards the internal evidence, the present reading of the sonnets will make that speak more eloquently than ever in favour of our accepting it as the utterance of Southampton. The letter has a touch of nature, a familiarity in the tone, beyond the dream or the daring of a forger

to assume, for the facts of the intimate personal friendship revealed for the first time by the present reading of the sonnets, which accord so perfectly with the tone of the letter, could not be sufficiently known, to warrant the statements, or support the design, had it been a forgery. In this letter, the earl pleads with his powerful friend the Lord Ellesmere, on behalf of the 'poor players of the Blackfriars,' and asks him to 'be good' to them 'in this the time of their trouble,' for they are threatened by the Lord Mayor and aldermen of London with the destruction of their means of livelihood 'by the pulling down of their playhouse.' The chief point for us is, that the Earl of Southampton introduces one of the bearers, 'William Shakspeare,' to the Lord High Chancellor's notice, as 'his *especial friend*,' a man who is 'right famous' in his quality as a writer of plays, and a husband of 'good reputation.' Now, to my thinking, that phrase 'my especial friend' would not have been ventured by a forger; he would not have hazarded the lordly largeness, if the fact had been visible, which is more than doubtful; for, although Shakspeare dedicated to the earl his 'love without end,' yet, apart from this letter, it could not be known that the earl proclaimed the especial friendship to be reciprocal, and the forger would not have had authentic warrant. Therefore I do not see how any other than Southampton could have so perfectly hit the very fact, which is now unveiled for the first time, in my reading of the sonnets. The present interpretation of these must help to prove the genuineness of the letter.[1] The sonnets themselves abound with proofs that

[1] The matter of this 'H. S.' letter is, in my humble opinion, most authentic; both openly and secretly so. There is a witness within it of more infallible authority than that of the Palæographists, who, in the case of a copy like this, can hardly know what it is they are called upon to disprove. Supposing a forger to have hit upon the personal friendship of the Earl for Shakspeare and dared to proclaim it, and made that the motive of the Earl's plea, he would not have ventured on the perilous attempt to mark the exact period of Shakspeare's retirement from the stage as an actor, and thus lamed his

the personal intimacy of Shakspeare and Southampton was very inward, the friendship most uncommon. So near are they, that in sonnet 39, the poet says the two are but one; and, that when he praises his friend, it is as though he were praising himself. Therefore, he proposes to take advantage of a separation, which is to divide them, and make their 'dear love' lose the name and look of singleness, by throwing into perspective that half which alone deserves to be praised. Absence and distance are necessary to show even in appearance that the two are not one! In sonnet 23, his love is so great that he cannot speak it, when they meet in person: the strength of his feeling is such as to tie his tongue, and make him like an unpractised actor on the stage, overcome by his emotion, so he tries to express it in his sonnets, pleading that they may be more eloquent with their silent love than the tongue, that might have said more. The plea also of sonnet 22 is most expressive of tender intimacy. 'Oh, my friend,' he says, 'be of yourself as wary as I will be of myself; not for myself, but on your account. I will bear your heart as cautiously, and keep it from all ill, as protectingly as a nurse carries her babe.' His spirit hovers about the earl. He warns him that youth is short, and beauty a fleeting glow. He defends him when he has been falsely accused and slandered by the gossips about the Court; is sad, when the earl is reckless and does break out in wild courses, or dwells in infectious society; wishes himself dead, rather than that he should have seen such sorrowful things; tries, as I read, to set the earl writing (in sonnet 77), by way of diver-

case by selecting the wrong point in illustrating the friendship! Then, the recommendation of Shakspeare on account of his *good reputation as a married man*, is so utterly opposed to the idea of a forgery. It was not one of the outlines of the poet's life pencilled ready for filling in! For it has always been assumed that his reputation as a married man was *not good*, and latterly it has been taken for granted that the Earl of Southampton had very private reasons for knowing so. Nevertheless, the letter, as I believe, states the real fact of the case in this, as in the other particulars, with a sureness beyond the happiest divination of a forger, and the life is not yet trodden out of it!

sion, for his moral behoof and mental benefit. He will write of him and his love in his absence abroad, and when he returns to England how lovingly (in sonnet 100) he holds him to look into the sun-browned face, with a peering jealousy of affection, to see what change has been wrought by the wear of war, and waste of time,—

> Rise, restive Muse, my Love's sweet face survey ;
> If Time have any wrinkle graven there.

'If any, be ready with the colour of immortal tint to retouch his beauty and make it live for ever in immortal youth.' Then we see that the poet's love grows warmer, as the world looks colder on the earl; it rises with the tide of calamity, that threatened to overwhelm him; it exults and 'looks fresh with the drops of that most balmy time,' when the poet welcomed his friend at the opened door of his prison, in 1603 (sonnet 107), and made the free light of day richer with his cordial smile.

'If the Earl of Southampton,' says Boaden, 'had been the person addressed by Shakspeare, we should expect the poet to have told the earl that but for his calamity and disgrace, mankind would never have known the resources of his mighty mind.' So might we if the poet had been a common flatterer, who had stood afar off and talked flamboyant nonsense that was never meant to be tested for the truth, never brought to bear upon the real facts because of the personal distance at which it was spoken. But this was not Shakspeare's position. The earl had not a mighty mind, and Shakspeare was not driven by stress of circumstances to laud the mental gifts which his friend did not possess. In only a single instance has he mentioned the intellect of the earl.[1] In this fact we may find one more illustration of the inwardness of their personal intimacy. They were too intimate, and knew each other

[1] Sonnet 82, 'Thou art as *fair in knowledge as in hue.*'

too well, for any 'bosh' to be tolerated on either side. When Shakspeare spoke of his friend Southampton it was from the quiet depths of genuine feeling, not from the noisy shallows of flattery; and such was the nature of their intercourse, the freedom of their friendship, that he was permitted to do so, and could afford it. What Shakspeare found in Southampton was not great gifts of mind to admire, but a fine generosity and hearty frankness of nature to love. He was one of those who grasp a friend with both hands to hold him fast, and wear him in their heart of hearts. Shakspeare loved him too truly to speak falsely of him. He was the only great poet in his time who never stood cap in hand, or dealt in '*lozengerie*.' His tone is like the voice of good breeding, gentle and low, with no straining for effect. Any exaggerative expression was unnecessary, and would have been most unnatural, which with Shakspeare means impossible. This mode of treatment proves the personal privacy. Shakspeare did not address his friend as a public man at a distance—had no need of the speaking trumpet—but was thus secret and familiar with him as a bosom friend.

Upon any theory of interpretation the personal intimacy must have been of the closest, most familiar kind. Those who have so basely imagined that Shakspeare and his young friend both shared one mistress must assume that the intimacy was one of great nearness. Also those who accept the coarsest reading of the 20th sonnet must admit that the poet was on very familiar terms with the earl to address him in the low loose language which they have attributed to him by their modern rather than Elizabethian reading. My interpretation supposes a nearness equally great, a personal intimacy equally secret, but as pure as theirs is gross, as noble as theirs is ignoble, as natural as theirs is unnatural. An intimacy which does not strain all probability in assuming it to have been close enough for Shakspeare to write dramatic sonnets on his friend's love

and courtship, as it does to suppose the poet wrote sonnets to proclaim their mutual disgrace, and perpetuate his own sin and shame. In truth it is the sense of that nearness which I advocate, which, working blindly, has given some show of likelihood to the vulgar interpretation; the tender feeling passing the love of woman which, carried into the interpretation of the impersonal sonnets by prurient minds, has made the intimacy look one of which any extravagance might be believed.

The personal sonnets all tend to show and illustrate this nearness of the two friends, only they prove it to have been on Shakspeare's part of the purest, loftiest, most manly kind. There is not one of those wherein Shakspeare is the speaker for certain, that can possibly be pressed into showing that the friendship had the vile aspect into which it has been distorted.

Southampton being identified as the person addressed, and the object of Shakspeare's personal affection, the intimacy must have been one that was perfectly compatible with the earl's love for a woman. For it is certain that he was in love, and passionately wooing Elizabeth Vernon, during some years of the time over which the sonnets extend. And it would be witlessly weak to suppose that Shakspeare wrote sonnets upon a disgraceful intimacy to amuse a man who was purely in love; out of all nature to imagine that he pursued Southampton in the wooing amorous way more fondly and tenderly than ever, after the earl had become passionately enamoured of Elizabeth Vernon. He would neither thrust himself forward as the lady's rival for the earl's love, nor appear in her presence-chamber covered with moral mire to remind them both of the fact that he and the earl had rolled in the dirt together; and the intimacy must have been such as to recommend Shakspeare to Elizabeth Vernon as a friend of the earl, not brand him as an enemy to herself. Again, Boaden is of opinion that the sonnets do not at all apply

to Lord Southampton, either as to age, character, or the bustle and activity of a life distinguished by distant and hazardous service, to something of which they must have alluded had he been their object. He argues that there was not sufficient difference in their ages for Shakspeare to have called the earl 'sweet boy.' The difference was 9 years and 6 months. Our poet was born April, 1564, and his friend October, 1573. Now if the two men had been of like mental constitution that difference in years would have made considerable disparity in character when the one was thirty and the other but twenty years of age. But one man is not as old as another at the same age, nor are men constituted alike. Shakspeare's mental life, and ten years' experience in such a life, were very different things to the life and experience of his young friend. He may have been quite warranted by this difference in age in calling the earl 'sweet boy,' but his expression did not depend on age alone. When a priest says 'my child,' he does not first stop to consider whether the person so addressed is some twenty years younger than himself. He is presumed to be speaking from a feeling that is not exactly governed or guided chronologically. So with Shakspeare. He is taking the liberty and latitude of affection. He uses the language of a love that delights to dally with the wee words and dainty diminutives of speech, and tries as it were to express the largeness of its feeling in the smallest shape, on purpose to get all the nearer to nature, it being the way of all fond love to express itself in miniature. It is one of Shakspeare's ways of expressing the fulness and familiarity of his affection rather than any difference in age. He speaks by virtue of that protecting tenderness of spirit which he feels for the youth—the prerogative of very near friendship—an authority which no age could necessarily confer. And it is also his way of expressing the difference of rank and position, as the world would

have it, that existed betwixt them; the distance at which he is supposed to stand is turned to account in the shape of an elder brotherhood. It is of set purpose that Shakspeare paints himself older than he was, as most obviously he has done; it is intended as a framework for his picture. He deepens the contrast and gives to his own years a sort of golden gloom, and mellow background, with the view of setting forth in more vernal hues the fresh ruddy youth of his friend. He puts on an autumnal tint and exaggerates his riper years on purpose to place in relief that image of youth which he has determined to perpetuate in all its spring-tide beauty, and the 'yellow leaf' throws out the ratheness of the green. This does not show that there were not sufficient years betwixt them, but that the intimacy of friendship was such as to permit the poet to obey a natural law which has served to finish his picture with a more artistic touch, and to further illustrate the familiarity of his affection.

It may be that to the dear and generous friendship of the earl, the world is to a large extent indebted for those beautiful delineations of loving friendship betwixt man and man which Shakspeare has given us, excelling all other dramatists here as elsewhere. There is a sacred sweetness in his manly friendship; fine and fragrant in its kind, as is the delicate aroma breathed by his most natural and exquisite women. No one, like him, in secular literature, has so tenderly shown the souls of two men in the pleasant wedlock of a delightful friendship. The rarest touch being reserved for the picture in which one friend is considerably older than the other. Then the effect is gravely-gladsome indeed; the touch is one of the nearest to nature. This we may fairly connect with his own affectionate feeling for the young earl, and see how that which was subjective in the sonnets has become objective in the plays. Thus, behind Bassanio and Antonio we may identify Southampton and Shakspeare. How much Shakspeare may have

adventured for his young friend who was bound up in the Essex bond,—how far he lent himself, in spite of his better judgment, we shall probably never know, but we may be sure that his love, like that of Antonio, was strong enough to surmount all selfish considerations. And so, at the pressing solicitations of Southampton, the drama of King Richard II. was altered by Shakspeare on purpose to be played seditiously, with the deposition scene newly added! This patent fact is my concluding proof of the personal intimacy of peer and poet, and of the force and familiarity of their friendship.[1]

[1] For a fact I hold it to be in spite of the squeamish assertion made by Mr. Collier to the contrary. The known friendship of Southampton for the poet is better evidence than anything in the recollections of Forman. The reply of Coke to Southampton's question as to what he thought they would have done with the Queen had they gained the Court points directly to Shakspeare's play. Mr. Attorney said the '*pretence was alike for removing certain councillors*, but it shortly after cost the King his life.' Then, if it were not Shakspeare's drama, which was some years old at the time, revived, with additions for Essex' purpose, what is the meaning of the advertisement prefixed to the edition of 1608 '*The Tragedy of King Richard the 2nd, with new additions of the Parliament scene and the deposing of King Richard. As it hath been lately acted by the Kinges Majesties servants, at the Globe*'? Plainly enough it *is the play* altered for the purpose which excited curiosity, and had a long run in consequence. The same advertisement is printed in the edition of 1615, and it is perfectly absurd to suppose that any other '*King Richard the Second*' was being played at Shakspeare's Theatre in the year 1611. This is going against the tide, and seeking to catch at a straw (Forman's Jack Straw!) most vainly.

PERSONAL SONNETS.

1592.

SHAKSPEARE TO THE EARL, WISHING HIM TO MARRY.

We may now look upon the dear friend of Shakspeare as sufficiently identified, and the nearness of the friendship as sufficiently established. In the first group of his sonnets the poet advises and persuades his young friend the Earl of Southampton to get married. A very practical object in writing the sonnets! This of itself shows that he did not set out to write after the fashion of Drayton and Daniel, and dally with 'Idea' as they did. Here is a young noble of nature's own making; a youth of quick and kindling blood, apt to take fire at a touch, whether of pleasure or of pain; likely enough to be enticed into the garden of Armida and the palace of sin. He is left without the guidance of a father, and the poet feels for him an affection all the more protecting and paternal. We may easily perceive that underneath the pretty conceits sparkling on the surface of these earlier sonnets there lies a grave purpose, a profound depth of wisdom. This urgency on the score of marriage is no mere sonneteering trick, or playing with the shadows of things. The writer knows well that there is nothing like true marriage, a worthy wife, the love of children, and a happy home, to bring the exuberant life into the keeping of the highest, holiest law. Nothing like the wifely influence, and the clinging

of children's wee fingers, for twining winningly about the lusty energies of youth, and realizing the antique image of Love riding on a lion; the laughing mite triumphantly leading captive the fettered might, having taken him 'prisoner, in a red rose chain!' Seeing his young friend surrounded with temptations, his personal beauty of mien and manner being so prominent a mark for the darts of the enemy, he would fain have him safely shielded by the sacred shelter of marriage. Accordingly he assails him with suggestion and argument in many forms of natural appeal; and whilst harping much on the main object for which marriage was designed, the harmony of the life truly wedded rises like a strain of exquisite music, as it were, wooing the youth from within the doors of the marriage sanctuary.

These sonnets the poet sends to his friend in 'written embassage' of love, hoping that he may yet have something worthy of print, so that he can dare to boast publicly of that affection for his friend, which he only ventures for the present to show privately.

DEDICATORY.

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
To thee I send this written embassage,
To witness duty, not to show my wit:
Duty so great which wit so poor as mine
May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it;
But that I hope some good conceit of thine
In thy soul's thought, all naked, will bestow it:
Till whatsoever star that guides my moving
Points on me graciously with fair aspect,
And puts apparel on my tattered loving,
To show me worthy of thy sweet respect:
Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee;
Till then, not show my head where thou mayst prove me.

From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby Beauty's rose might never die,
But as the riper should by time decease,
His tender heir might bear his memory:
But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,
Making a famine where abundance lies,
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel:
Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament,
And only herald to the gaudy spring,
Within thine own bud buriest thy content
And, tender churl! mak'st waste in niggarding:
Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.

(1.)

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,
Will be a tattered weed, of small worth held:
Then being asked where all thy beauty lies,
Where all the treasure of thy lusty days,
To say, within thine own deep-sunken eyes,
Were an all-eating shame, and thriftless praise:
How much more praise deserved thy beauty's use,
If thou could'st answer, "*this fair child of mine*
Shall sum my count, and make my old excuse,"
Proving his beauty by succession thine!
This were to be new-made when thou art old,
And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.

(2.)

Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest,
Now is the time that face should form another,
Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest,
Thou dost beguile the world—unbless some mother:
For where is she so fair, whose uneared womb
Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry?
Or who is he so fond, will be the tomb
Of his self-love to stop posterity?
Thou art thy Mother's glass, and she in thee
Calls back the lovely April of her prime:

So thou, through windows of thine age, shalt see,
Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time:
But if thou live—remembered not to be—
Die single, and thine image dies with thee.

(3.)

Unthrifty loveliness! why dost thou spend
Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy?
Nature's bequest gives nothing, but doth lend,
And, being frank, she lends to those are free:
Then, beauteous niggard! why dost thou abuse
The bounteous largess given thee to give?
Profitless usurer! why dost thou use
So great a sum of sums, yet canst not live?
For, having traffic with thyself alone,
Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceave:
Then how, when Nature calls thee to be gone,
What acceptable audit canst thou leave?
Thy unused beauty must be tombed with thee,
Which, used, lives thy executor to be.

(4.)

Those hours, that with gentle work did frame
The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell,
Will play the tyrants to the very same,
And that unfair, which fairly doth excell:
For never-resting Time leads summer on
To hideous winter, and confounds him there;
Sap check'd with frost, and lusty leaves quite gone,
Beauty o'er-snowed, and bareness everywhere:
Then, were not Summer's distillation left,
A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,
Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,
Nor it, nor no remembrance what it was!
But flowers distilled, tho' they with winter meet,
Leese but their show; their substance still lives sweet.

(5.)

Then let not Winter's rugged hand deface
In thee thy summer, ere thou be distilled:
Make sweet some phial; treasure thou some place
With beauty's treasure, ere it be self-killed:
That use is not forbidden luxury,

Which happies those that pay the willing loan:
That's for thyself to breed another thee,
Or, ten times happier! be it ten for one:
Ten times thyself were happier than thou art,
If ten of thine ten times refigured thee:
Then what could Death do if thou shouldst depart,
Leaving thee living in posterity?
Be not self-willed, for thou art much too fair,
To be Death's conquest, and make worms thine heir.

(6.)

Lo, in the Orient when the gracious light
Lifts up his burning head, each under-eye
Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,
Serving with looks his sacred majesty:
And having climb'd the steep-up heavenly hill,
Resembling strong Youth in his middle age,
Yet mortal looks adore his beauty, still
Attending on his golden pilgrimage:
But when from highmost pitch, with weary car,
Like feeble Age, he reeleth from the day,
The eyes—'fore duteous—now converted are
From his low tract, and look another way:
So thou, thyself outgoing in thy noon,
Unlooked on diest, unless thou get a son.

(7.)

Music to hear! why hear'st thou music sadly?
Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy:
Why lov'st thou that which thou receiv'st not gladly,
Or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy?
If the true concord of well-tunéd sounds,
By unions married, do offend thine ear,
They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
In singleness the parts that thou shouldst bear:
Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,
Strikes each in each by mutual ordering;
Resembling Sire, and Child, and happy Mother,
Who, all in one, one pleasing note do sing:
Whose speechless song being many, seeming one,
Sings this to thee—"*Thou single wilt prove none.*"

(8.)

Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye,
That thou consum'st thyself in single life?
Ah! if thou issueless shalt hap to die,
The world will wail thee like a makeless wife;
The world will be thy widow! and still weep
That thou no form of thee hast left behind,
When every private widow well may keep,
By children's eyes, her husband's shape in mind:
Look, what an unthrift in the world doth spend
Shifts but its place, for still the world enjoys it;
But beauty's waste hath in the world an end,
And kept unused, the user so destroys it:
No love towards others in that bosom sits
That on himself such murderous shame commits.

(9.)

For shame! deny that thou bear'st love to any,
Who for thyself art so unprovident:
Grant, if thou wilt, thou art beloved of many,
But that thou none lov'st is most evident;
For thou art so possessed with murderous hate
That 'gainst thyself thou stick'st not to conspire;
Seeking that beauteous roof to ruinate
Which to repair should be thy chief desire:
O, change thy thought, that I may change my mind!
Shall Hate be freer lodged than gentle Love?
Be, as thy presence is, gracious and kind,
Or to thyself, at least, kind-hearted prove;
Make thee another self, for love of me,
That beauty still may live in thine or thee.

(10.)

As fast as thou shalt wane, so fast thou growest
In one of thine, from that which thou departest;
And that fresh blood which youngly thou bestowest
Thou may'st call thine, when thou from youth convertest:
Herein lives wisdom, beauty and increase;
Without this, folly, age, and cold decay:
If all were minded so, the times should cease,
And threescore years would make the world away:
Let those whom Nature hath not made for store,
Harsh, featureless, and rude, barrenly perish:

Look, whom she best endowed she gave the more;
Which bounteous gift thou should'st in bounty cherish;
She carved thee for her seal, and meant thereby
Thou should'st print more, nor let that copy die.

(11.)

When I do count the clock that tells the time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls are silvered o'er with white;
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And Summer's green all girded up in sheaves,
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard;—
Then of thy beauty do I question make,
That thou amongst the wastes of time must go,
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake
And die as fast as they see others grow;
And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence,
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence.

(12.)

O, that you were yourself! but Love, you are
No longer yours, than you yourself here live
Against this coming end you should prepare,
And your sweet semblance to some other give:
So should that beauty which you hold in lease,
Find no determination; then you were
Yourself again after yourself's decease,
When your sweet issue your sweet form should bear:
Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,
Which husbandry in honour might uphold
Against the stormy gusts of winter's day,
And barren rage of Death's eternal cold?
O none but unthrifts! Dear, my Love, you know
You had a Father; let your Son say so.

(13.)

Not from the stars do I my judgement pluck,
And yet methinks I have astronomy;
But not to tell of good or evil luck,
Of plagues, of dearths, or seasons' quality:
Nor can I fortune to brief minutes tell,

'Pointing to each his thunder, rain, and wind;
Or say with Princes if it shall go well,
By oft predict that I in Heaven find:
But from thine eyes my knowledge I derive,
And,—constant stars,—in them I read such art,
As truth and beauty shall together thrive,
If from thyself to store thou would'st convert;
Or else of thee this I prognosticate,
Thy end is Truth's and Beauty's doom and date.

(14.)

When I consider everything that grows
Holds in perfection but a little moment;
That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;
When I perceive that men as plants increase,
Cheeréd and check'd even by the self-same sky;
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
And wear their brave state out of memory;
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,
Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay,
To change your day of youth to sullied night;
And all in war with Time for love of you,
As he takes from you, I engraft you new.

(15.)

But wherefore do not you a mightier way
Make war upon this bloody tyrant, Time?
And fortify yourself in your decay
With means more blessed than my barren rhyme?
Now stand you on the top of happy hours!
And many maiden gardens, yet unset,
With virtuous wish would bear your living flowers,
Much liker than your painted counterfeit:
So should the lines of life that life repair,
Which this time's Pencil, or my pupil Pen,[1]

[1] This line has never yet been read, nor could it be whilst printed as heretofore:—

'Which this, Time's pencil, or my pupil pen.'

It was impossible to see what *this* meant. What Shakspeare says is, that the best painter, the master-pencil of the time, or his own pen of a learner,

Neither in inward worth, nor outward fair,
Can make you live yourself in eyes of men:
To give away yourself keeps yourself still,
And you must live, drawn by your own sweet skill.

(16.)

Who will believe my verse in time to come,
If it were filled with your most high deserts?
Though yet, heaven knows, it is but as a tomb
Which hides your life, and shows not half your parts!
If I could write the beauty of your eyes,
And in fresh numbers number all your graces,
The age to come would say '*this Poet lies,*
Such heavenly touches ne'er touched earthly faces:'
So should my papers, yellowed with their age,
Be scorned, like old men of less truth than tongue:
And your true rights be termed a Poet's rage,
And stretchéd metre of an antique song:
But were some child of yours alive that time,
You should live twice; in it, and in my rhyme.

(17.)

will alike fail to draw the Earl's lines of life as he himself can do it, by his 'own sweet skill.' This pencil of the time may have been Mirevelt's; he painted the Earl's portrait in early manhood.

PERSONAL SONNETS.

1592–3.

SHAKSPEARE TO THE EARL, IN PRAISE OF HIS PERSONAL BEAUTY.

In the next two groups of Sonnets there are two ideas which touch in one or more places. These are the praise of his friend's beauty and the promise of immortality. Yet, they are wrought out with a sufficient distinctness to warrant my keeping them apart. I group them according to their unity of feeling rather than follow their numbers, for the confusion has now commenced which runs all through the remainder of the Sonnets. The subject of this present gathering is the Earl's beauty of person, which the Poet pourtrays with a moralising touch. Manly comeliness was of greater account with the Poets in Shakspeare's time than it is in ours. We consider such taste too feminine. Our Poet thought his friend's graces of person worthy of commendation. He searches amongst old paintings and the ancient chronicles to see if pen or picture has expressed such an image of youth and beauty. He looks at his own elder face in the glass, and tries to paint it with his friend's boy-bloom, and thinks it very gracious when seen beneath the crown of his friend's affection. He points out what is the loftiest beauty.

But Shakspeare may have had another motive for singing of the Earl's personal good looks. It is noticeable that

the Poet's urgency on the score of his friend's marriage ceases with the first seventeen sonnets. So that it is reasonable to suppose Southampton had met and fallen in love with 'the fair Mistress Vernon,' and that he being desirous of marrying her, there was no further call for Shakspeare's advice on the subject. This being so, the sonnets in praise of the Earl would sooner or later be written with a consciousness that they would come under the eyes of Elizabeth Vernon, and the Poet's laudation be likewise for her ears, his portrait of the Earl coloured for her eyes! Not for himself alone nor for the Earl merely did he utter all the praise of his friend's beauty of person and constancy in love, but for another interested and loving listener. These sonnets I have supposed the Poet to send with a sort of dedicatory strain in which he congratulates himself on having so dear a friend.

DEDICATORY.

Let those who are in favour with their stars
Of public honour and proud titles boast,
Whilst I, whom Fortune of such triumph bars,
Unlooked-for joy in that I honour most:
Great Princes' favourites their fair leaves spread,
But as the marygold at the sun's eye;
And in themselves their pride lies buriéd,
For at a frown they in their glory die:
The painful warrior famouséd for worth[1]
After a thousand victories once foiled,
Is from the book of honour raséd forth,
And all the rest forgot for which he toiled:
Then happy I, that love and am beloved
Where I may not remove, nor be removed.

(25.)

[1] The Quarto reads 'famoused for worth,' which only needs the rhyme of 'forth' to make out both sense and sound. Why 'worth' should have been changed for 'fight' by Theobald, it is difficult to perceive. The Poet never could have written 'famoused for fight.' Steevens says: 'the stanza is not worth the labour that has been bestowed on it,' but as commentators

A Woman's face, with Nature's own hand painted,
Hast thou the master-mistress of my passion;
A Woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
With shifting change, as is false women's fashion;
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,
Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,
Which steal Men's eyes and Women's souls amazeth:
And for a Woman wert thou first created,
Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing:
But since she marked thee out for women's pleasure,
Mine be thy love and thy love's use their treasure.

(20.)

If there be nothing new, but that which is
Hath been before, how are our brains beguiled,
Which, labouring for invention, bear amiss
The second burthen of a former child!
O, that record could with a backward look,
Even of five hundred courses of the sun,
Show me your image in some antique book,
Since mind at first in character was done!
That I might see what the old world could say
To this composéd wonder of your frame;
Whether we are mended, or where better they,
Or whether revolution be the same:
O! sure I am the wits of former days
To subjects worse have given admiring praise.

(59.)

When in the chronicle of wasted time
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And Beauty making beautiful old rhyme
In praise of ladies dead, and lovely knights,

must make unnecessary alterations by way of improving Shakspeare, he tries his hand at a transposition thus:—

'The painful warrior for worth *famousèd*,
After a thousand victories once foiled,
Is from the book of honour quite *rasèd*.'

And he unostentatiously remarks that the rhyme may be recovered in *that way* 'without further change.

Then in the blazon of sweet Beauty's best,
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique Pen would have expressed
Even such a beauty as you master now!
So all their praises are but prophecies
Of this our time, all you prefiguring;
And, for they looked not with divining eyes,
They had not skill enough your worth to sing:
For we, which now behold these present days,
Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

(106.)

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And Summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or Nature's changing course untrimmed;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wanderest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

(18.)

Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye
And all my soul and all my every part;
And for this sin there is no remedy,
It is so grounded inward in my heart:
Methinks no face so gracious is as mine,
No shape so true, no truth of such account;
And for myself mine own worth do define,
As I all others in all worths surmount:
But when my glass shows me myself indeed,
Beated and chopped with tanned antiquity,
Mine own self-love quite contrary I read;
Self so self-loving were iniquity:
'Tis thee—myself—that for myself I praise,
Painting my age with beauty of thy days.

(62.)

THE HIGHEST BEAUTY.

My glass shall not persuade me I am old,
So long as youth and thou are of one date:
But when in thee Time's furrows I behold,
Then look I death my days should expiate:
For all that beauty that doth cover thee,
Is but the seemly raiment of my heart,
Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me;
How can I then be elder than thou art?
O, therefore, Love, be of thyself so wary,
As I, not for myself, but for thee will;
Bearing thy heart which I will keep so chary
As tender nurse her babe from faring ill:
Presume not on thy heart when mine is slain,
Thou gav'st me thine not to give back again.

(22.)

What is your substance? whereof are you made,
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?
Since every one hath, every one, one shade,
And you, but one, can every shadow lend!
Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit
Is poorly imitated after you;
On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,
And you in Grecian tires are painted new:
Speak of the spring and foison of the year:
The one doth shadow of your beauty show,
The other as your bounty doth appear,
And you in every blessed shape we know:
In all external grace you have some part,
But you like none, none you, for constant heart.

(53.)

O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem,
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!
The Rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
For that sweet odour which doth in it live:
The Canker-blooms have full as deep a dye,
As the perfuméd tincture of the roses,
Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly
When Summer's breath their maskéd buds discloses:
But for their virtue only is their show,

They live unwooed, and unrespected fade;
Die to themselves: Sweet Roses do not so;
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made:
And so of you, beauteous and lovely Youth,
When that shall fade, my verse distils your truth.

(54.)

PERSONAL SONNETS.

1592–3.

SHAKSPEARE TO THE EARL, PROMISING IMMORTALITY.

SHAKSPEARE'S two dominant ideas in the sonnets written for the Earl of Southampton are, first, to get the Earl married, and next to make him immortal. In these present he has grown bolder in his tone, and apparently more conscious of his power. It is quite likely that the Earl's fight with fortune had begun when most of these were written, and the Poet grows defiant of time and fate on his friend's behalf. In the sonnet which I have placed as Dedicatory to the group, the poet unwittingly tells us how great was his own personal modesty. When he is with the Earl he is unable to say how much he loves him; cannot do any justice in expression to his own feelings, and so he asks that his books, his writings, may speak for him, silently eloquent.

DEDICATORY.

As an unperfect Actor on the stage
Who with his fear is put beside his part,
Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,
Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart;
So I, for fear of trust, forget to say
The perfect ceremony of love's rite,
And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,
O'ercharged with burthen of mine own love's might:
O, let my books be then the eloquence[1]
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast;
Who plead for love and look for recompence,
More than that tongue that more hath more expressed:
O learn to read what silent love hath writ;
To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.

(23.)

Devouring Time, blunt thou the Lion's paws,
And make the Earth devour her own sweet brood;
Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce Tiger's jaws,
And burn the long-lived Phœnix in her blood;
Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleets,
And do whate'er thou wilt, swift-footed Time,
To the wide world, and all her fading sweets;
But I forbid thee one most heinous crime:
O, carve not with thy hours my Love's fair brow,
Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen;
Him in thy course untainted do allow,
For Beauty's pattern to succeeding men!
Yet, do thy worst, old Time; despite thy wrong,
My Love shall in my verse live ever young.

(19.)

[1] 'O, let my *books* be then the eloquence.'

Steevens gives a decided preference to '*looks*' instead of *books*, because 'the eloquence of looks would be more in unison with Love's fine wit, and much more poetical.' As if Shakspeare could have said that his *looks looked* for recompence! The right expression tends to show that the Poet was here addressing the person to whom he *did* dedicate his *books*—i.e. the Earl of Southampton.

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end,
Each changing place with that which goes before
In sequent toil all forwards do contend:
Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crowned,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound:
Timé doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
And delves the parallels on Beauty's brow;
Feeds on the rarities of Nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow:
And yet, to times in hope, my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

(60.)

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced
The rich, proud cost of outworn buried age:
When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed,
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the watery main,
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store;
When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state itself confounded to decay;
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate,
That time will come, and take my Love away:
This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

(64.)

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
O, how shall Summer's honey breath hold out
Against the wreckful siege of battering days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays?

O fearful meditation! where, alack!
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
O none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my Love may still shine bright.
(65.)

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of Princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time:
When wasteful wars shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor War's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory!
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity,
That wear this world out to the ending doom:
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.
(55.)

PERSONAL SONNETS.

1592-3.

SHAKSPEARE TO THE EARL, CHIEFLY CONCERNING A RIVAL POET, ADJUDGED TO BE MARLOWE.

I HAVE grouped these sonnets as naturally as I can, according to my interpretation of the Poet's feeling. I do not say this series was written or sent exactly as it now stands. These may not have been all composed at the same time, but they are all on the same subject, and my arrangement gives them a probable beginning, progress, and a fit conclusion; the very thought, indeed, that Shakspeare loved to dwell on, and wished his friend to rest in! He pleads here, in the last sonnet, as he sings so often, for personal love. He did not care for admiration as the writer of sonnets, and the Earl might read others for their style if he would only look at his when he was gone, 'for his love.' The subject is those other poets and writers who have followed the example of Shakspeare in celebrating the praise of the Earl his friend, or in seeking to publish under the protection of his name. It is not one poet only of whom the speaker is jealous, but, he says he has so often called on the Earl's name, and received so much inspiration for his verse, that every 'alien pen' and outsider have followed suit, and sought to set forth their poesy under his patronage. His eyes have

not only taught the dumb to sing, but have made Ignorance to soar, and added feathers to the wing of learning; made majesty itself doubly majestic.

But he pleads:—'Be most proud of what I write, because it is so purely your own. In the work of others you only mend the style, but you are all my art, and you set my rude ignorance as high as the art of the most learned. Whilst I alone sang of you my verse had all your grace, but now my Muse gives place to another, and my numbers are decayed. I know well enough that your virtue and kindness deserve the labour of a worthier pen, the praise of a better Poet; yet what can the best of poets do? He can only repay back to you that which he borrows from you.' In sonnet 3 of this group the poet singles out his great rival amongst those who are singing and dedicating to the Earl. 'I feel diffident,' he says, 'in writing of you when I know that a far better Poet is spending his strength in your praise, and singing at his best to make me silent. But since you are so gracious, there is room on the broad ocean of your worth for my small bark as well as for his of proud sail and lofty build. And if he ride in safety whilst I am wrecked, the worst is this, it was my love that made me venture and caused my destruction.' He then questions himself as to the cause of his recent silence, and he attributes it to the fact of the Earl having 'filed up the lines' of his rival's poetry! Then comes another reason for his keeping quiet. His Muse is mannerly, and holds her tongue whilst better poets are singing. He thinks good thoughts whilst they speak good words. He is like the unlettered clerk, who by rote cries 'Amen' to what his superior says. 'Respect others then,' he urges, 'for what words are worth, but me for my dumb thoughts, too full for utterance! I cannot lavish words easily, as those who do not feel what they say, and who only write from the fancy, and can thus cull the choicest flowers to deck their subject. As I am

true in love I can but write truthfully. Let them say more in praise of you who are expecting to hear their words reechoed in praise of themselves. I am not writing with an eye to the sale of my sonnets. I never saw that you needed flattery, and therefore did not think of painting nature. I found that you exceeded the utmost a poet could say. Therefore have I been silent, and you have imputed this silence for my sin, which shall be most my glory, because I have let beauty speak for itself; there lives more life in one of your eyes alone than both your poets could put into any number of their verses. Who is it that says most? Which of us can say more than that you are you, and that you stand alone? It is a poor pen that can lend nothing to its subject; but in writing of you, it will do well if it can fairly copy what is already writ in you by Nature's own hand. The worst of it is, you are not satisfied with the simple truth thus told, you are fond of being written about, and this makes it hard for those who can only say the same old thing of you over and over again. I admit you were not married to my Muse, and that you have perfect freedom to accept as many dedications as you please. Your worth is beyond the reach of my words, and so no doubt you are forced to seek for something more novel. And do so, my dear friend; yet when they have painted your portrait in flaunting colours, I shall say your truth was best mirrored in my unaffected truthfulness. Let them practise their gross painting where cheeks are in need of blood. If you live after I am dead and gone, and should once more happen to look over these poor lines of mine, and compare them with the newer poetry of the day, to find them far outstripped by later pens, keep them for the warm love in them, not for their literary merit, and vouchsafe me but this one loving thought, 'Had my friend lived he would have brought me something better than this; something to compare with the best.

But since he died, and we have better poets, I will read their poetry for its style, and keep his for his love.'

So oft have I invoked thee for my Muse,
And found such fair assistance in my verse,
As every alien pen hath got my use,
And under thee their poesy disperse!
Thine eyes, that taught the dumb on high to sing,
And heavy Ignorance aloft to flee,
Have added feathers to the Learned's wing,
And given grace a double majesty:
Yet be most proud of that which I compile,
Whose influence is thine, and born of thee:
In others' works thou dost but mend the style,
And Arts with thy sweet graces gracéd be:
But thou art all my Art, and dost advance
As high as learning my rude ignorance.

(78.)

Whilst I alone did call upon thy aid,
My verse alone had all thy gentle grace;
But now my gracious numbers are decayed,
And my sick Muse doth give another place!
I grant, sweet Love, thy lovely argument
Deserves the travail of a worthier pen;
Yet what of thee thy Poet doth invent,
He robs thee of, and pays it thee again:
He lends thee virtue, and he stole that word
From thy behaviour; beauty doth he give,
And found it in thy cheek; he can afford
No praise to thee but what in thee doth live:
Then thank him not for that which he doth say,
Since what he owes thee thou thyself dost pay.

(79.)

O, how I faint when I of you do write,
Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,
And in the praise thereof spends all his might,
To make me tongue-tied, speaking of your fame!
But since your worth—wide as the ocean is—
The humble as the proudest sail doth bear,

My saucy Bark, inferior far to his,
On your broad main doth wilfully appear!
Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat,
Whilst he upon your soundless deep doth ride;
Or, being wrecked, I am a worthless boat,
He of tall building, and of goodly pride:
Then if he thrive, and I be cast away,
The worst was this; my love was my decay.

(80.)

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,
Bound for the prize of all-too-precious you,
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse,
Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew?
Was it his spirit by Spirits taught to write
Above a mortal pitch that struck me dead?
No, neither he, nor his compeers by night
Giving him aid, my verse astonishéd!
He, nor that affable-familiar Ghost
Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,
As victors of my silence cannot boast;
I was not sick of any fear from thence:
But when your countenance filéd up his line,
Then lacked I matter: *that* enfeebled mine!

(86.)

My tongue-tied Muse in manners holds her still,
While comments of your praise, richly compiled,
Reserve their character with golden quill,
And precious phrase by all the Muses filed!
I think good thoughts, while others write good words,
And, like unlettered clerk, still cry 'Amen'
To every line[1] that able spirit affords
In polished form of well-refinéd pen:
Hearing you praised, I say, '*'tis so, 'tis true,*'
And to the most of praise add something more;
But that is in my thought, whose love to you,
Tho' words come hindmost, holds his rank before:

[1] 'Every line.' The Quarto reads 'every himne,' but Shakspeare knew that the most unlettered clerk would not cry 'Amen' after the hymn. Also, 'line' is more consonant with the march of the verse and the emphasis on 'every'; therefore I venture to think that 'himne' was a misprint.

Then others for the breath of words respect,
Me for my dumb thoughts speaking in effect.

(85.)

So is it not with me as with that Muse
Stirred by a painted beauty to his verse;
Who heaven itself for ornament doth use,
And every fair with his fair doth rehearse;
Making a couplement of proud compare
With sun and moon, with earth and sea's rich gems,
With April's firstborn flowers, and all things rare,
That Heaven's air in this huge rondure hems:
O, let me, true in love, but truly write,
And then believe me, my Love is as fair
As any mother's child, tho' not so bright
As those gold candles fix'd in Heaven's air:
Let them say more that like of hear-say well,
I will not praise that purpose not to sell.

(21.)

I never saw that you did painting need,
And therefore to your fair no painting set!
I found, or thought I found, you did exceed
The barren tender of a Poet's debt!
And therefore have I slept in your report,
That you yourself, being extant, well might show
How far a modern quill doth come too short,
Speaking of worth, what[1] worth in you doth grow:
This silence for my sin you did impute,
Which shall be most my glory, being dumb:
For I impair not beauty being mute,
When others would give life and bring a tomb:
There lives more life in one of your fair eyes
Than both your Poets can in praise devise.

(83.)

Who is it that says most? which can say more
Than this rich praise—that you alone are you?
In whose confine immuréd is the store
Which should example where your equal grew!

[1] '*What* worth,' meaning *which* worth. I should have thought the word 'what' might have been a misprint for 'which,' but was checked in changing it by the sound of the first word in the next line but one.

Lean penury within that Pen doth dwell,
That to his subject lends not some small glory;
But he that writes of you, if he can tell
That you are you, so dignifies his story;
Let him but copy what in you is writ,
Not making worse what Nature made so clear,
And such a counterpart shall fame his wit,
Making his style admired everywhere!
You to your beauteous blessings add a curse,
Being fond on praise, which makes your praises worse.
(84.)

I grant thou wert not married to my Muse,
And therefore may'st without attaint o'erlook
The dedicated words which writers use
Of their fair subject, blessing every Book:
Thou art as fair in knowledge as in hue,
Finding thy worth a limit past my praise,
And therefore art enforced to seek anew
Some fresher stamp of the time-bettering days!
And do so, Love! yet when they have devised
What strainéd touches rhetoric can lend,
Thou, truly fair, wert truly sympathised
In true-plain words, by thy true-telling friend;
And their gross painting might be better used
Where cheeks need blood; in thee it is abused.
(82.)

If thou survive my well-contented day,
When that churl Death my bones with dust shall cover,
And shalt by fortune once more re-survey
These poor rude lines of thy deceaséd lover,
Compare them with the bettering of the time;
And tho' they be outstripped by every pen,
Reserve[1] them for my love, not for their rhyme,
Exceeded by the height of happier men:
O, then vouchsafe me but this loving thought!
Had my friend's Muse grown with this growing age,

[1] 'Reserve,' i.e. 'preserve.'

A dearer birth than this his love had brought,
To march in ranks of better equipage:
But since he died, and Poets better prove,
Theirs for their style I'll read; his for his love.
(32.)

To get at the life within life of these sonnets we must look a little closer into this group, with a full belief that when our poet used particular words he freighted them with a particular meaning; definiteness of purpose and truth of detail being the first recommendation and the last perfection of these sonnets. The pen with which he wrote for his patron was as pointed as that with which he wrote for his Theatre.

In the first sonnet of this group Shakspeare is passing in review those writers who are under the patronage of the Earl, and he specifies two or three of these by personifying certain of their well-known qualities; he is telling the Earl what his influence has wrought in divers ways:—

'Thine eyes, that taught the dumb on high to sing,
And heavy Ignorance aloft to flee,
Have added feathers to the Learned's wing,
And given grace a double majesty.'

Now, I think it possible to identify who these four personifications represent.

In the first line Shakspeare speaks of himself as having been dumb until the Earl turned his eyes—which are the light of the countenance—on him to make him break silence and soar and sing, by his encouragement of the poet to appear in public, and dedicate his first poem to his Patron. And the Earl not only did this, but he has made 'Heavy Ignorance' take wings and fly aloft. This 'Heavy Ignorance' on whom the Earl has worked nothing short of a miracle in lifting him from his native position as a plodder on the earth I surmise to be *Florio*, the translator of Montaigne's Essays. 'Resolute John Florio!' as

he signed his name; Thrasonical John Florio, as he was by nature. Florio dedicated works to the Earl of Southampton, and was, on his own showing, greatly indebted to the Earl. In 1598 he inscribed his 'World of Words' to that brave and bounteous peer, with this frank confession of the support he had received:—'In truth I acknowledge an entire debt, not only of my best knowledge, but of all; yea, of more than I know or can, to your bounteous Lordship, in whose pay and patronage I have lived some years, to whom I owe and vowe the years I have to live. But, as to me and many more, the glorious and gracious sunshine of your Honour hath infused light and life.'

Warburton conjectured that there was a literary set-to betwixt Florio and Shakspeare. Farmer also took this view: he tells us that Florio gave the first affront by saying, in his work entitled 'Second Fruits,' published in 1591, 'The plays that they play in England are neither right comedies nor right tragedies, but *representations of Histories without decorum.*' Shakspeare's Chronicle Plays correspond perfectly to these 'representations of Histories;' they were amongst the first in the field, and altogether the most successful; and it is supposed, with great probability, that these are the works aimed at. The Poet took note of this gird, as is surmised, and quietly waited his opportunity. In composing 'Love's Labour's Lost,' a year or two afterwards, he copied his character of Holofernes from the lay-figure of John Florio. Here the author of the 'World of Words,' a small dictionary of the Italian and English tongues, is represented as the pedant who had '*lived long on the alms-basket of words*,' and the 'teacher of Italian,' which Florio was, and collector of proverbs and choice sayings, has *been at a great feast of languages and stolen the scraps.*' Warburton imagines that Florio gives the retort, *not* courteous, to Shakspeare's having made fun of him, by getting furious in a passage

of his preface to the new edition of his 'World of Words,' 1598, in which he says:—'There is another sort of leering curs that rather snarle than bite, whereof I could instance in one who, lighting on a good sonnet of a gentleman's, a friend of mine, that loved better to be a Poet than to be counted so, called the Author a Rhymer. *Let Aristophanes and his comedians make plais*, and scowre their mouths on Socrates, those very mouths they make to vilifie shall be the means to amplifie his virtue.' Warburton maintained, as is quite warranted by the tone of the defence, that the sonnet was Florio's own. He further says, that Shakspeare paraded it in the 'extemporal epitaph on the Death of the Deer,' which begins:—

'The preyful princess pierc'd and prick'd a pretty pleasing pricket.' *Love's Labour's Lost*, act iv. sc. 2.

This conjecture is not merely ingenious, but it is of exceeding likelihood, and my reading of sonnet 78 may throw some light on the subject, from a far different point of view. If Shakspeare in public spoke slightingly of the Rhymer, we see him in this sonnet privately laughing in his sleeve at 'heavy Ignorance' trying to take wings. I have not the least doubt that the sonnet was Florio's, nor that it was addressed to the Earl of Southampton, in *whose pay and patronage* he had then (1598) lived some years. It would be the Earl who told Florio that Shakspeare did not think much of his poetry, which nettled him wrathfully, much to the amusement of the two friends. We have, in Florio, almost on his own confession—although he tries a little to disguise himself—a most fitting candidate for identification as the 'heavy Ignorance,' which the Earl had taught to soar aloft. And if he did aspire to mount on the wings of rhyme in approaching his patron, there is no other competitor amongst those who dedicated to the Earl that comes near him in per-

sonal appropriateness. It is curious to think, in connection with this subject, that Shakspeare's own copy of Florio's translation of Montaigne's Essays—now in the British Museum—should be the sole book in all the world known to have been in our Poet's possession, and the only one which has preserved his autograph for us.[1]

Having spoken of himself and heavy Florio, Shakspeare comes to another pen which made him use the epithet of 'Alien.' The Earl has not only made the dumb to sing and Ignorance to fly, in spite of its weight, but he has 'added feathers to the Learned's wing.' I repeat, the Poet is enumerating some who have written under the Earl's patronage, and this he does by personifying their chief characteristics. And here we have a sly hit at Master Tom Nash. He wielded an 'alien' pen with the spirit of an Ishmaelite. His hand was against every man, including Shakspeare. He it was who set up so conspicuously for 'Learning;' he was one of the learned sort; and he was hitting continually at those who had not received a scholastic nurture, from which, however, he himself had been weaned before his time. In his 'Pierce Penilesse' p. 42, he exclaims, 'Alas, poor Latinless Authors!' In his epistle to the 'Astrophel and Stella' of Sidney, he says, speaking of the works of Sextus Empedocles, 'they have been lately translated into English *for the benefit of unlearned writers*' (not readers). The Nash and Greene *clique* had been the first to attack Shakspeare on the score of his little country grammar; his education at a country grammar-school; and charged him with plucking the

[1] Florio dedicated his first work to the Earl of Leicester in 1578, as the 'maidenhead of his industry.' The man who did that might well think the '*posteriors of the day*' for what the vulgar call the afternoon was '*congruent and measurable; a word well-culled, choice, sweet, and apt; picked, spruce, and peregrinate.*' In 1611 he withdrew his dedication to Southampton, and inscribed his 'World of Words' to the 'Imperial Majesty of the highest-born Princess Anna of Denmark, crowned Queen of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland.'

feathers from the wing of Learning for the purpose of beautifying himself—the upstart Crow! And Nash is here personified in his own chosen image. The Poet makes an allusion which the Earl and his friends would appreciate, and he covertly returns the borrowed plumes. He says, in effect, that the Earl has, in patronising Nash, returned those feathers to the wing of Learning, which he, Shakspeare, had been publicly charged with purloining. In a second allusion he says the Earl's favour has set the rude 'ignorance' at which his rivals laughed as high as the learning of which they boasted.

In 'Pierce Penilesse, his supplication to the Devil,' we shall find that towards the end of 1592, Nash had not only found a Patron to praise, but had been in some personal companionship with 'my Lord'—had been staying with him in the country for 'fear of infection.' This was at Croydon, where his play of 'Will Summers' last Will and Testament' was privately produced in the autumn of 1592, to all appearance, under the patronage of Southampton. The good luck has somewhat softened his 'Alien pen' of the earlier pages of that work, which is bitter in its abuse of patrons. At page 42, Nash writes, 'If any Mecænas bind me to him by his bounty, or extend some round liberality to me worth the speaking of, I will do him as much honour as any poet of my beardless years shall in England.' He made his supplication to the Devil because he had not then found his Patron Saint. At page 90, he has found his man. He calls him 'one of the bright stars of nobility, and glistering attendants on the true Diana.' He is also 'the matchless image of honour, and magnificent rewarder of virtue; Jove's eagle-born Ganymede; thrice noble Amyntas; most courteous Amyntas!' Todd supposes that Ferdinando, Earl of Derby, was meant; because Spenser, in his 'Collin Clout's come home again,' calls him by the common pastoral name of 'Amyntas.' But there

is nothing known to connect Nash with this Earl, as there is with Shakspeare's patron and friend. The description fits no one so perfectly as it does the young Earl of Southampton. It sets before us the very image of youth which Shakspeare calls more lovely than Adonis; Ganymede having been the most beautiful of mortal youths,[1] Jove's boy-beloved; the Court's 'fresh ornament' of Shakspeare's first sonnet is here one of the 'glistering attendants on the true Diana.' The 'matchless image of Honour' corresponds exactly to Southampton, the anagram made out of whose name was the 'Stamp of Honour.' Also, he is supposed not to have been heard of as yet out of the echo of the Court. We know that Nash was under the patronage of Shakspeare's friend. In the year 1594, he dedicated his 'Life of Jack Wilton' to the Earl of Southampton, with a reference to the difference betwixt it and earlier writings, and this work, though not published until 1594, was *dated* 1593. So that I can have no doubt of 'Pierce Penilesse' being really inscribed to the Earl of Southampton in person if not by name, or that Nash's was the 'Alien pen' that had followed Shakspeare in writing privately to the Earl. What other 'poesy' Nash may have sought to 'disperse' under the Earl's patronage I know not. He must have written much that has not come down to us. He informs us, in his 'Pierce Penilesse,' that his Muse was despised and neglected, his pains not regarded, or but slightly rewarded. Meres places him with the poets of the time, as one of the best for comedy. Harvey calls him a Poet, and Drayton accords him a leaf of the Laurel. But I hold that the sonnet at the end of 'Pierce Penilesse' is addressed to the Earl of Southampton,[2] and that this method of passing

[1] Here, then, is one answer to Boaden's assertion that the Earl of Southampton could not have been the youthful noble who was beloved by Shakspeare—*because he was not sufficiently handsome!*

[2] 'Pursuing yesternight, with idle eyes,
The Fairy Singer's stately-tun'd verse,

off his poetry gives the aptness to Shakspeare's use of the word 'disperse.' It may be the 'dedicated words that writers use,' likewise contains a hit at Nash's eulogistic hyperbole. The 'Life of Jack Wilton' was inscribed with a most high-flown dedication to the Earl, whom he called 'a dear lover and cherisher, as well of the lovers of poets as of poets themselves;' and he adds, '*Incomprehensible is the height of your spirit, both in heroical resolution and matters of conceit. Unrepriveably perished that book, whatsoever to waste paper, which on the diamond rock of your judgment disastrously chanceth to be shipwrecked.*'

The fourth of this group I hold to be Marlowe. The Earl has 'given grace a double majesty.' His 'eyes' have made the dumb to sing, heavy Ignorance to mount, added feathers to the wing of 'Learning' itself, and given to grace a double majesty. It is a somewhat singular expression. The 'double majesty' is very weighty to apply to such a word as 'grace!' It would not be used without an intended stress. A poet is here praised for the grace of his manner and majesty of his music. The chief characteristic of his poetry is that it is majestic. The very quality of all others that we, following the Elizabethans, associate with the march of Marlowe's 'mighty line!' But the patron, Shakspeare says, has exalted

---

And viewing, after chapmen's wonted guise,
What strange contents the title did rehearse;
I straight leapt over to the latter end,
Where, like the quaint comedians of our time
That when their play is done do fall to rhyme,
I found short lines to sundry Nobles penned,
Whom he as special mirrors singled forth
To be the patrons of his poetry.
I read them all, and reverenced their worth,
Yet wondered he left out thy memory!
But therefore guessed I he suppressed thy name,
Because few words might not comprise thy fame.'

A delightful confession and an interesting picture of Nash on the look-out for some one to flatter, and hurrying eagerly over the list of Spenser's patrons!

the poet, and made his poetry doubly majestic, or twice what it was before. If Marlowe be *the* rival poet of these sonnets—one of the two spoken of by Shakspeare as 'both your poets'—it follows that he is *the* poet of these four lines, the sense of which I should read thus :—

'Thine eyes that taught the dumb (*myself*) on high to sing,
And heavy Ignorance (*Florio*) aloft to flee,
Have added feathers to the Learned's (*Nash's*) wing,
And given Marlowe double majesty.'

It will be seen that the first two are of the past, the Earl has at the present moment patronised the latter two; these are new writers for him. These facts will sum up the time, standpoint, and motive of these sonnets. Time, just after the publication of 'Pierce Penilesse,' in 1592, and before Marlowe's death in 1593. Motive, jealousy because the 'aliens' in feeling had invaded the sanctuary of his friendship. But there is one amongst those whom the Earl patronises that Shakspeare acknowledges to be a great poet, a better poet than himself, an able spirit, whose singing has sufficed to silence our Poet, or rather, the marked interest which the patron has taken in his poetry has touched him to the quick.

Boaden, with his jaunty presumption and high-handed way, assures us that the 'better spirit' and great rival poet here spoken of was poor Samuel Daniel; because he was brought up at Wilton House, and inscribed his 'Defence of Rhyme' to William Herbert, in 1603, and *because*, in the 82nd sonnet, Shakspeare 'hints at the actual ground of his jealousy.' But if these sonnets should be those which Meres mentioned in 1598, Shakspeare could not have been disturbed by Daniel's 'dedicated words' in 1603. Besides which, the 'Defence of Rhyme' was a prose work, and the dedication of a prose work cannot, in this rival's case, be the actual ground of jealousy. It is the proud full sail of his *great verse* bound for the prize of his patron, and the fact that the patron has touched up

the rival's *lines* with his silver file, which stuck in Shakspeare's throat, and kept him silent. Again, Steevens had remarked that perhaps sonnet 86 might refer to the celebrated Dr. Dee's pretended intercourse with an angel, and other familiar spirits, and Boaden says:—'There can be no doubt about it, the fact is upon record. Queen Elizabeth and the Pembroke family were Dr. Dee's chief patrons; whose exalted minds were not exempt from the mania of the times, which the sounder philosophy of Shakspeare led him to denounce.' But there is every doubt about it. It is utterly and absolutely opposed to the spirit of Shakspeare, as revealed in the personal sonnets, that he should sneer at *his* patron, or denounce his practices, even if he had been a believer in Dr. Dee; and, secondly, it is the poet whose tastes are wizardly, and whose work ranges above a mortal pitch, by aid of the spirits that visit him nightly. Nothing is said of the patron in the matter; nothing implied. Also, it is a supposition perfectly improbable that Shakspeare should have pointed out the 'proud full sail' of Daniel's (of all others) 'great verse,' or characterise it as written 'above a mortal pitch,' except ironically, which cannot be, or else the 'all-too-precious you' would lie open to suspicion likewise. The whole sonnet is seriously in earnest. Boaden does not take it to be sarcastic; he has no doubt that Shakspeare actually vailed his bonnet, not only to Spenser, but to Daniel and Chapman, to Harington and Fairfax! Lastly, to all appearance, Daniel did not seek to 'disperse' his 'poesy' under the Earl of Pembroke's patronage, if he inscribed a prose work to that nobleman; or, if he did seek, the young Earl must have grown shy of him; possibly because Daniel had been brought up in the family.

In a letter of this poet's, addressed to the Earl of Devonshire (1604), he is sorry for having offended his patron by pleading before the Council, when called in

question for the Tragedy of Philotas, that he had read part of it to the Earl (of Devonshire), and says he has *no other friend in power to help him!* If this had been the great poet of whom Shakspeare and William Herbert are supposed to have thought so highly, and whose relation had been so intimate, how then should poor Daniel have had no other friend in power to help him, when the friendship of Herbert had been sufficiently great to make Shakspeare jealous? Nothing, save the blindest belief in the Herbert hypothesis, which of necessity shifts the date at which most of the sonnets were written, could possibly obscure so plain a fact as that this group of sonnets must have been composed by Shakspeare's 'pupil pen' before he had taken his place amongst the poets of his time, and that Marlowe is *the* rival poet of these lines.

That Marlowe is the *other* poet of sonnets 80 and 86 is shown by the most circumstantial evidence in every line and touch of our poet's description. Marlowe was a dramatic celebrity before Shakspeare; he had about him something of that glow of Giorgione's dawn, the promise of which was only fulfilled in the perfect day of Titian; and there can be no doubt that Shakspeare looked up to him, and was somewhat led captive by his lofty style. He would in those younger years fully appreciate the delicious bodily beauty of many of Marlowe's lines, like those in which Faustus describes his visionary Helen. He has, in 'As you like it,' a kindly thought for the dead poet, and quotes a line from Marlowe's unfinished poem, 'Hero and Leander,' with which he may have been acquainted in MSS., *because* it was composed for the Earl of Southampton. He would be the first to give him all praise for having, in his use of blank verse, struck out a new spring of the national Helicon with the impatient pawing-hoof of his fiery war-horse of a Pegasus; but for which Shakspeare himself

might possibly have remained more of a rhymer, and not attained his full dramatic stature. Nothing could better give us our poet's view of himself and the rival, than the image drawn from Drake and the Spanish Dons; afterwards used by Fuller in his description of Shakspeare and Ben Jonson. Marlowe is here represented as the great portly Spanish galleon, of tall build and full sail, and goodly pride, and Shakspeare is the small trim bark—the 'saucy bark' that can float with the 'shallowest help;' venture daringly on the broad ocean, and skip lightly round the vast bulk of his rival. The comparison is full of our poet's modesty and lurking humour. He considers his rival as far superior to himself, and speaks of him as the 'better spirit,' or the greater poet of assured fame. Shakspeare, it appears, has been silent for some time, and the Earl has reproached him for it. Meanwhile, others have been singing and dedicating to the patron; and this 'better spirit' has been spending all his might with the intention of praising or honouring the patron in whose name he is writing. He has not only flourished in the Earl's favour, but the Earl himself has lent his hand to polish up, or give the finishing touch to, something of the rival poet's.

Shakspeare asks:—

'Was it *the proud full sail of his great verse,*
Bound for the prize of all-too-precious you,
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse?
Was it his spirit, *by Spirits taught to write*
Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead?
No: neither he, nor *his compeers by night*
Giving him aid, my verse astonishéd,—
He, nor *that affable-familiar Ghost*
Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,
As victors of my silence cannot boast;
I was not sick of any fear from thence!
But when *your countenance filéd up his line,*
Then lacked I matter; *that* enfeebled mine.'

If we believe that Shakspeare had any power of compelling spirits to appear dramatically—any mastery of stroke in rendering human likeness—any exact and cunning use of epithet—how can we doubt that the name to be written under that portrait is Christopher Marlowe? Or, that his is the poetry whose extravagant tone Shakspeare accounted 'above a mortal pitch?'

Those lines give us the very *viva effigies*, not only of the Poet ('he of tall building and of goodly pride'—*sonnet* 80), but of the man whose reputation was so marked, the author who had eaten of the forbidden fruit of knowledge, the poetry characterised in the precise language used by the poets of that time. It is a triple account, that only unites in one man, and that man is Marlowe—far and away beyond all possible competition. In his lust after power, and with his unhallowed glow of imagination, Marlowe became a student of the Black Arts, and a practiser of necromancy—he was reputed to have dealings with the Devil. No doubt his Dr. Faustus gave a darker colour to such report, and in the eyes of many as well as in their conversation, the man and his creation became one. They would commonly call him 'Faustus,' just as they called him 'Tamburlaine.' And this is exactly how Shakspeare has treated the subject. In his dramatic way, he has identified Marlowe with Faustus, and he presents him upon the stage where, in vision, if it be not an actual fact, the Play is running at the rival Theatre, whilst the Poet is composing his sonnet. The conditions on which Faustus sells his soul are, that Mephistophiles shall be his familiar spirit, who shall do all his behests, execute all his commands, bring all that he requires, be in his house or chamber invisible until wanted, and then he is to appear in whatsoever shape Faustus pleases. And Mephistophiles promises to be the slave of Faustus, and give him more than he has wit to ask. A very *plausible familiar ghost* or attendant spirit! Thus our

Poet sees the Doctor, or Marlowe, and his *familiar* 'gulling him nightly' with his promises, and such pleasant intelligence as that *in Hell is all manner of delight!* And the drama is once more played, so to speak, in the sonnet. We have Marlowe identified as the poet who talked of deriving help from spirits, *by spirits taught to write above a mortal pitch*—the poet of 'Faustus,' with his 'affable familiar ghost' and 'execrable art'—*Mephistophiles, his visitant that gulled him nightly*—and the poet of that 'proud full sail' or resounding march of his *great* verse, which is here rendered according to the tenor of all contemporary description, and identified by the characteristic that is uppermost in the minds of all who are acquainted with the King Cambyses vein of Marlowe.

It may be objected that, although we can identify Florio, Nash, and others, as having dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, there is no external evidence to prove that Marlowe ever did. It may be that his early death caused much to be hidden from our sight that was known to Shakspeare when he wrote these sonnets. Marlowe may have Englished the Elegies of Ovid for the Earl at his own particular request, and died before they were printed. He may also have written the love-song 'Come live with me,' for Southampton, and that be the very reason why Shakspeare wrote the answer to it—for he most assuredly did write the answer containing the line 'In reason ripe, in folly rotton,' in spite of the daring of those adventurers in search of Raleigh's poetry, who are as bold as was that 'Shepherd of the ocean' himself in gathering up treasure of another kind. Further, the description of this poet in his relationship to the patron does not so much dwell on what he has done for the Earl as what he is at present doing. He is at work in the Earl's name when the poet writes sonnet 80, and Shakspeare is aware that the rival is then spending all his might doing his utmost to honour the Earl and make our Poet 'tongue-

tied' in speaking of his patron's fame. He alludes chiefly to work in progress, not to work done. There is rivalry in a race then being run, and Shakspeare says if the rival should be victor over him he will know and be able to say:—

> The worst was this, my love was my decay.

In sonnet 86, likewise, the Poet speaks of the rival bark as being '*bound for* the prize of all-too-precious you,' not as having touched the shore, or reached haven. In both these sonnets the rival poet is working for the Earl, and there is nothing improbable in supposing that Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander' was intended to be dedicated to Southampton; that he was writing it when death cut short the poet's life, and the poem was left unfinished, and that Shakspeare was acquainted with the fragment in MS. and so quoted from it the line 'who ever loved that loved not at first sight,' with an acknowledgement to the 'Dead Shepherd' in 'As you Like it.'

There are further reasons why Marlowe should be this rival poet.

Shakspeare tells the Earl that his silence was not owing to the fact of the rival's being reputed to write by the help of spirits and 'metaphysical aid,' nor that he was the great Dramatist, and author of 'Faustus,' nor yet that he knew the 'proud full sail' of the rival's 'great verse' was bound for the Earl as his intended prize; it was none of these things that did his 'ripe thoughts' in his 'brain inhearse,' or cause them to be still-born.

This seeking of a 'fresher stamp of the time-bettering days'—this accepted 'travail of a worthier pen;' these lofty passionate braggart words of dedication; the 'strained touches' and the 'gross painting' make the true love of Shakspeare's heart feel a little hurt; but these things have not stirred his jealousy. There is a deeper cause for that. The Earl's countenance has 'filéd up' the rival's poetry;

which must mean more than that he has received it and smiled graciously upon it. He says explicitly that it was not the rival's being bound for the Earl, nor the dedication, intended or accepted, that made him fearful; but when the Earl undertook to 'file up' his rival's line, that was indeed a different matter.

This it was, Shakspeare confesses, that probed his infirmity—made him feel jealous, and keep silence. That there is a touch of jealousy and a good deal of rivalry in these sonnets relating to the 'other poet,' is apparent and must be admitted. And in this aspect there is no poet who could make such an appeal so justly to Shakspeare's feelings as Marlowe. Marlowe *was* the rival poet at the opposition theatre. He was then *the* Shakspeare of the English drama, in the full flush and high tide of his brief and brilliant success. 'Tamburlaine the Great,' 'Faustus,' the 'Jew of Malta,' 'Edward II.,' had come crowding on the stage one after the other, with Alleyn playing his best in the principal characters. Heywood, writing forty years afterwards, celebrates Marlowe as the best of poets, and Alleyn as the best of players. Shakspeare was far more likely to be jealous for his Theatre than for himself, and, if the Earl had looked over one of his rival's works and suggested amendments, this would touch the player as well as the natural man in Shakspeare, and cause him to keep that silence which has been imputed to him as his sin, and to show this feeling of jealousy when he next addressed the Earl. My conclusion respecting these three personifications is, that Florio's is possible, Nash's probable, Marlowe's certain. Florio's is a guess; Nash's an inference; Marlowe's a demonstration.

In this group of sonnets we may learn one or two things by word of mouth, so to say, from Shakspeare himself, which readers will do wisely to remember. There can be no doubt that the Poet is here speaking personally of his own feelings, and of his own writings. His whole ar-

gument is for truth to nature. And he most emphatically rebukes those who have assumed that he perpetrated all kinds of sonneteering nonsense, and exceeded all others in his fantastic exaggeration; that he transcended all the amorous wooers of the Ideal, and lavished his love in ardent language upon airy nothings. In these sonnets he tells us that he writes of and from reality. It is not with him, he says, as with that Muse 'stirred by a *painted beauty* to his verse,' by which he means that he celebrates no mere visionary image or fiction of the fancy, as Drayton for example did, in his sonnets to 'Idea,'[1] and likewise the author of 'Licia, or Poems of Love,' printed in 1593, which work consists of 52 sonnets in honour of the admirable and singular virtues of the writer's lady, full of fervent affection and passionate praise. In his address to the reader the author says, 'If thou muse what my Licia is, take her to be some Diana, at the least chaste; or some Minerva, no Venus, fairer far. It may be she is Learning's image, or some heavenly wonder, which the precisest may not dislike; perhaps, under that name, I have shadowed Discipline.'[2] So is it not with me, Shakspeare replies, and, therefore, I do not imitate those who use heaven itself for ornament, and couple all the glories of earth with their imaginary Mistress, for the sake of making proud comparisons in her favour. I am only rich in reality, and being truly in love can only

[1] Published, says Ritson, with the 'Shepherd's Garland,' and 'Roland's Sacrifice to the Nine Muses,' in a volume printed for T. Woodcocke, 1593: 4to. Drayton was amusingly anxious to show that he *was* 'stirred by a *painted* beauty to his verse,' and that *his* love was only an 'Idea.' Shakspeare is as earnest in asserting that he writes from reality. The greatest master of Reality is here the advocate of Realism in Art; the soul of sincerity himself, he cannot tolerate that which is insincere in others.

[2] Thomas Watson—he who, according to the taste of Steevens, was 'a more elegant sonnetteer than Shakspeare,' also published in 1593 the 'Tears of Fancy, or Love disdained,' in sixty sonnets. Our Poet may have had this work in view, as well as the 'Licia,' when protesting that his sonnets were not mere fancy-work, but the outcome of real feeling.

write truthfully. This sonnet contains an answer to those who hold that the flowery tenderness and exquisite spring-tints of sonnets 98 and 99 were devoted to a man as the object of them. The Poet here says he does not compare his friend '*with April's first-born flowers and all things rare, that Heaven's air in this huge rondure hems.*' He protests as plainly as any living author could, who might write to the 'Times,' or 'Athenæum,' of to-day, that he does not use the 'gross painting' the 'strained touches Rhetoric can lend.' It is the very opposite of his nature and art to write in the extravagant style and 'high-astounding terms,' the 'huffing, braggart, puft language' that Marlowe so often used, whose verses, as Greene had said in 1588:—'jet on the stage in tragical buskins; every word filling the mouth like the faburden of Bow-Bells.' May we not also here read a potent protest against such a work as 'Titus Andronicus' being ascribed to Shakspeare?

This group of sonnets was written before the death of Marlowe, in June 1593. I am of opinion that sonnet 80 marks the moment when Shakspeare was about to embark with his first literary venture, the 'Venus and Adonis.' If he be wrecked, if he sinks whilst Marlowe swims, he says, the cause will have been his love for the Earl; not literary vanity.

NOTE.

I think there is proof in both sonnets and plays that Shakspeare had read Marlowe's two sestiads of 'Hero and Leander' in MSS. For example, compare sonnets 4 and 6 with these lines:

> 'Treasure is abused
> When misers keep it: being put to loan,
> In time it will return us two for one.'

> 'But this fair gem, sweet in the loss alone,
> When you fleet hence, can be bequeathed to none.'

Sonnets 20 and 53 with these lines:

> 'Some swore he was a maid in man's attire,
> For in his looks were all that men desire.'

And sonnet 80 with these:

> 'A stately-builded ship, well-rigged and tall,
> The ocean maketh more majestical.'

Also, readers of 'Romeo and Juliet' will recognise Marlowe's 'gallop amain' and 'dark night is Cupid's day.' I cannot doubt that Shakspeare was acquainted with this poem years before it was printed, nor that he characterises its sensuous *grace*, and refers to it as having been written for the Earl of Southampton. In dedicating the published book to Sir Thomas Walsingham, Edward Blunt hints that the poem has had 'other foster countenance,' but that his name is likely to prove more '*agreeable* and *thriving*' to the work, which was the view of a sensible publisher, for the other fostering countenance — Southampton's — might not have shed so favourable an influence in 1598, the year in which the fragment was first printed.

Having omitted to express the thought in the text, I would here note my conjecture, that the miserable death of Marlowe is referred to in '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*,' where we meet with—

> 'The THRICE-THREE MUSES mourning for the death
> Of Learning, late deceased in beggary!'

That disreputable end of one who ought to have taken a nobler leave of the world, was indeed a subject for a 'satire keen and critical.' And surely this was the Poet who, in sonnet 85 (p. 131), is said to write with 'golden quill and precious phrase by ALL THE MUSES filed?'

A PERSONAL SONNET.

1593–4.

SHAKSPEARE IS ABOUT TO WRITE ON THE COURTSHIP OF HIS FRIEND SOUTHAMPTON, ACCORDING TO THE EARL'S SUGGESTION.

'And now I will unclasp a secret book.'

TURNING to the Book of Sonnets, the reader will see that we can read them straight on as Personal Sonnets up to the 26th, but with the 27th we are all adrift; the spirit changes so obviously as to necessitate a change of speaker. Till now the feeling was one of repose in the affection which the Poet celebrated. Here the feeling has all a lover's restlessness. In the previous sonnets we have not been left in doubt as to the sex of the person addressed; there were many allusions to its being a Man. We now meet with sonnet after sonnet, and series after series, in which there is no mention of sex. The feeling expressed is more passionate, and the phrase has become more movingly tender; far closer relationship is sung, and yet the object to whom these sonnets are written never appears in person. There is neither 'man' nor 'boy,' 'him' nor 'his.' How is this? Surely it is not the wont of a stronger feeling and greater warmth of affection to fuse down all individuality and lose sight of sex. That is not the way of Nature's or of Shakspeare's working. Here is negative evidence that the speaker is not addressing a man. The internal evidence and poetic proof are in favour of its being a Woman. There is a spirit too

delicate for the grosser ear of a man. The imagery is essentially feminine. There is a fondness in the feeling, and a preciousness in the phrase that tell of 'Love's coy touch.' Also there are secret stirrings of nature which influence us as they might if we were in the presence of a beautiful woman disguised: little tell-tales of consciousness and whisperings in the air. Many of the sonnets addressed by Shakspeare to the Earl are as glowing in affection, as tender in phrase as could well be written from man to man, but there is a subtle difference betwixt these and others that, as I shall show, are addresssd to a woman. The conditions under which the Poet created did not permit of his branding them with the outward signs of sex; but the difference exists in the secret spirit of them. We continually catch a breath of fragrance, as though we were treading upon invisible violets, and are conscious of a perfusive feminine grace; whilst a long and loving acquaintanceship brings out the touches and tendernesses of difference, distinct as those notes of the nightingale that make her song so peerless amongst those of other birds. There is a music here such as could only have found its perfect chord in a woman's heart. Once we shut our eyes to the supposition that all these sonnets were meant for a man, we shall soon feel that in numbers of them the heart of a lover is going forth with thrillings ineffable towards a woman, and, in the unmistakeable cry, we shall hear the voice of that love which has no like—the absorbing, absolute, all-containing Love that woman alone engenders in the heart of a man. Not that Shakspeare is here wooing a woman in person. He would not have done that and left out the sex. They are written on Southampton's courtship. It is not Shakspeare who speaks, but Southampton to his lady. This will account for the impassioned tenderness, and, at the same time, for the absence of all mention of the sex of the person addressed,

which would naturally result *from the poet's delicacy of feeling*, or, from a reticence agreed upon.

There will be nothing very startling in the proposition that our Poet devoted sonnets to his friend's love for Elizabeth Vernon, if we think for a moment of his words addressed in public to Southampton, in the year 1594. 'What *I have to do* is yours; being part in all I have *devoted* yours.' Now, if he alluded to his sonnets in that dedication of 'Lucrece,' as I maintain he did, there is but one way in which the allusion could apply. He would not have promised to write a book, or a series of sonnets, and speak of them as a part of what he had to do for the Earl if they were to be mere poetical exercises or personal to himself. Such must have been altogether fugitive—the subjects unknown beforehand. Whereas he speaks of the work as *devoted* to the Earl, something that is fixed, and fixed, too, by, or with the knowledge of the person addressed. This I take to refer to the fact that, at the Earl's suggestion, he had then agreed to write dramatic sonnets on the subject of Southampton's courtship. And as they were in hand when he dedicated his second poem to Southampton, I infer that they were commenced in 1593.

If my theory of the sonnets be true, the sonnets themselves ought to yield the most convincing proof that it is so. They should tell their own tale, however marvellous it may be; nay, they should speak with a more certain sound because of the mystery. The voice should be all the clearer if it comes from the cloud. This they will do. Only we must have the courage to believe that Shakspeare knew what he was writing about, and that he was accustomed to use the English language in its plainest sense, except where words *would* flower double on account of the fulness of his wit. We must not lose sight of the literal truth and substance of his meaning in following the figurative shadow, or we shall quite miss the palpable

facts, and find ourselves in the position of others who have had to make all sorts of excuses for Shakspeare's indefiniteness. Let us only remember that these sonnets are by the writer who got nearest to nature through the closeness of his grasp of reality; and a false interpretation has hitherto hindered our seeing that his grip was as close, his feeling as true, his language as literal here as in his dramas. Then we shall find that they do in very truth tell their own story according to the theory now proposed and set forth. Not merely in the underlying evidence—the inner facts which can only be paralleled in the outer life of the different speakers, the distinct individuality of the characters pourtrayed—but it actually stares us in the face on the surface, so close to us that we have overlooked it by being too far-sighted.

I purpose showing that after our Poet had written a certain number of personal sonnets to the Earl, his dear friend, advising him to marry, and the Earl had met and fallen in love with the 'faire Mistress Vernon,' Shakspeare then began, at the Earl's own request, to write sonnets dramatically on the subject of the Earl's passion, and the trials, 'tiffs,' and misadventures of a pair of star-crossed lovers, with the view of enhancing their pleasures and enriching their pains by his poetic treatment of their love's tender and troublous history. The intimacy, as we have seen from the sonnets which are personal, was of the nearest and dearest kind that can exist between man and man. Were there no proof to be cited it would not be so great a straining of probability to imagine the intimacy close and secret enough for Shakspeare to write sonnets on Southampton's love, in this impersonal indirect way, as it is to suppose it was close enough for them to share one mistress, and for Shakspeare to write sonnets for the purpose of proclaiming the mutual disgrace and perpetuating the sin and shame. It might fairly be argued also that the intimacy being of this secret

and sacred sort, would naturally take a greater delight in being illustrated in the unseen way of a dramatic treatment. It would be sweeter to the Earl's affection; more perfectly befitting the Poet's genius; the celebration of the marriage of two souls in the most inner sanctuary of friendship.

But there is proof.

For all who have eyes to see, the 38th sonnet tells us most explicitly that the writer has done with the subject of the earlier sonnets. There is no further need of advising the Earl to marry when he is doing all he can to get married. But, says the Poet, he cannot be at a loss for a subject so long as the Earl lives to *pour* into his verse his *own argument*. The force of the expression '*pour'st* into my verse,' shows that this is in no indirect suggestive way, but that the Earl has now begun to supply his own argument for Shakspeare's sonnets. This argument is too 'excellent,' too choice, in its nature for '*every vulgar paper to rehearse*.' Here is something 'secret, sweet and precious,' not to be dealt with in the ordinary way of personal sonnets. This excelling argument calls for the most private treatment, and to carry out this a new leaf is turned over in the Book of Sonnets. If the result be in any way worthy the Earl is to take all credit, for it is he who has suggested the new theme, supplied the fresh argument, and struck out a new light of invention; he has '*given Invention light*,' lighted the Poet on his novel path. Thus, accepting the Earl's suggestion of writing dramatically on the subject given, the Poet calls upon him to *be*, to *become* the tenth Muse to him. Obviously he had not so considered him whilst writing *to* the Earl; but as he is about to write *of* him dramatically, he exclaims '*be* thou the tenth Muse!' And if his new sonnets should please the Earl and his friends, who are curious in such matters, his be the pain, the labour; the Earl's shall be the praise.

The reader will see how consistently the thought of this sonnet follows the series in which the Poet has expressed his jealousy of the adulation of insincere rivals. He has now stepped into the inner circle of the Earl's private friendship, where they cannot pass. They may stand on the outside and address him, but the Earl has taken our poet into the inmost place of his private confidence, and whispered into his ear and breathed into his verse the argument of his love for Elizabeth Vernon, too excellent for every common paper or ordinary method to rehearse. The other sonnets contain a lover's querulousness, this has the secret satisfaction of the chosen one who has been favoured above all others.

SHAKSPEARE IS ABOUT TO WRITE SONNETS UPON THE EARL'S LOVE FOR ELIZABETH VERNON.

How can my Muse want subject to invent,
Whilst thou dost breathe, that pour'st into my verse
Thine own sweet argument, too excellent
For every vulgar paper to rehearse?
O, give thyself the thanks, if aught in me
Worthy perusal stand against thy sight;
For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee,
When thou thyself dost give invention light?
Be thou the tenth Muse, ten times more in worth
Than those old Nine which rhymers invocate,
And he that calls on thee, let him bring forth
Eternal numbers to outlive long date:
If my slight Muse do please these curious days,
The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise.
(38.)

It has been said that such amorous wooings as these of Shakspeare's sonnets, when personally interpreted, were common betwixt man and man with the Elizabethan sonneteers. But where is the record of them? In whose

sonnets shall we find the illustration? Not in Spenser's, nor Sidney's, Drayton's, nor Daniel's, Constable's nor Drummond's. Warton instanced the 'Affectionate Shepherd'; but Barnefield, in his address 'To the curteous Gentlemen Readers' prefixed to his 'Cynthia,' &c., expressly forbids such an interpretation of his 'conceit,' and states that it was nothing else than 'an imitation of Virgil in the 2nd Eclogue of Alexis.' There is no precedent whatever, only an assumption, a false excuse for a foolish theory. The precedent that we find is for such sonnets being written dramatically. It was by no means uncommon for a Poet to write in character on behalf of a Patron, and act as a sort of secretary in his love affairs, the letters being put into the shape of sonnets. In Shakspeare's plays we meet with various allusions to courting by means of 'Wailful sonnets whose composed rhymes should be full-fraught with serviceable vows.' Thurio, in the 'Two Gentlemen of Verona,' goes into the city to seek a gentleman who shall set a sonnet to music for the purpose of wooing Sylvia. Gascoigne, who died 1577, tells us, many years before Shakspeare wrote in this way for his young friend, he had been engaged to write for others in the same fashion. The author of the 'Forest of Fancy,' 1579, informs us that many of the poems were written for '*persons who had occasion to crave his help in that behalf.*' Marston in his 'Satyres,' 1598, accuses Roscio (Burbage), the tragedian, of having written verses for Mutio, and he tells us that '*absolute Castilio had furnished himself in like manner in order that he might pay court to his Mistress.*' And as he is glancing at the Globe Theatre, may not he have had Shakspeare and Southampton in his eye? '*Absolute Castilio*' is characteristic of the Earl, especially in the mouth of an envious poet whom he did not patronise.

Drayton also tells us in his 21st sonnet that he knew

a gallant who wooed a young girl, but could not win her. He entreated the poet to try and move her with his persuasive rhymes. And such was the force of Poesy, whether heaven-bred or not, that he won the Mistress for his friend with the very first sonnet he wrote; that was sufficient to make her dote on the youth beyond measure. So that in showing Shakspeare to have written dramatic sonnets for the Earl of Southampton, to express his passion for Mistress Vernon, we are not compelled to go far in search of a precedent for the doing of such a thing; it was a common custom when he undertook to honour it by his observance. In the sonnet just quoted, Shakspeare accepts the Earl's suggestion that he should write dramatic sonnets upon subjects supplied by Southampton, who has thus 'GIVEN INVENTION LIGHT.'

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

1593–4.

SOUTHAMPTON IN LOVE WITH ELIZABETH VERNON.

THESE four sonnets are among the most beautiful that Shakspeare wrote; a greater depth of feeling is sounded: a new and most natural stop is drawn, which has the power to 'mitigate and swage with solemn touches troubled thoughts' and make the measure dilate into its stateliest music; the poetry grows graver and more sagely fine. Point by point, note by note, the most special particulars are touched, and facts fresh from life and of the deepest significance are presented to us, yet we are unable to identify one of them as belonging to the life and character of Shakspeare. The music is full of meaning—the slower movement being necessary because of the burden it bears—but we do not know *what* it means. If we suppose Shakspeare to be speaking, the more pointed the verity, the greater the vagueness. Simply we cannot tell what he is talking about in so sad a tone. It is possible that he may have lost dear friends, although, so far as we know, when these sonnets were written he had not even lost a child. Also, it is probable that, full of winning cheerfulness and sunny pleasantness, and 'smiling government' of himself as he was, he had his night-seasons of sadness and depression; that he experienced reverses of fortune at his theatre, and sat at home in the night-

time whilst his fellows were making merry after work, and nursed his hope and strength with cordial loving thoughts of his good friend. But we cannot picture Shakspeare turned malcontent and miserable; looking upon himself as a lonely outcast, bewailing his wretched condition; nursing his cankering thoughts prepensely, and rocking himself, as it were, over them persistently. This cannot be the man of proverbial sweetness and smoothness of disposition, the incarnation of all kindliness, the very spirit of profound and perennial cheerfulness who, in sonnet 32, calls *his* life a 'well-contented day!' If Shakspeare had at times felt depressed and despondent for want of sympathy, it was surely most unlike him to make such dolorous complaints to this dear friend whom he had just addressed as being more to him than all the world beside, and whose love had crowned him with a crown such as Fortune could not confer. In making the Poet his friend, he had honoured Shakspeare (his own words) beyond the power of the world's proudest titles; enriched him with a gift of good that Fortune could not paragon. How then, into whatsoever 'disgrace' he had fallen, could he pour forth his selfish sorrow to this friend who was so supremely his source of joy? How could he talk of being friendless and envying those who had friends when he was in possession of so peerless a friend? How should he speak of 'troubling *deaf* Heaven with his *bootless* cries,' when Heaven had heard him and sent him such a friend, and his was the nature to straightway apprehend the Giver in the gift? How could he 'curse his fate,' which he held to be so blessed in having this friend? How should he speak of being 'contented least' with what he enjoyed most when he had said this friend was the great spring of his joy? How should he exclaim against Fortune when he had received and warmly acknowledged the best gift she had to bestow? Moreover, these cries of self would sooner or later have seemed bitterly selfish

for they would be addressed to a man who had a fair cause of complaint against Fortune, and a real right to utter every word that has been ascribed to Shakspeare himself in these exclamatory sonnets, with their wistful looks, and dolorous ejaculations, and tinge of lover's melancholy. We may rest assured that Shakspeare was the last man to have made any such mistake in Nature and in Art. If he had his sorrows he would have kept them out of sight whilst his friend was suffering; he who has nearly kept himself out of sight altogether, and who comes the closest to us just for the sake of smiling up into the face of this friend, and of showing us that this was the man whom he once loved, as he told us, the only times he ever spoke in prose, and proclaimed that his love for him was without end. The personal reading is altogether wrong; it does not touch these sonnets at any one point, much less fathom the depth of their full meaning. The character expressed is in heart and essence, as well as in every word, that of a youthful spirit who feels in 'disgrace with Fortune,' and the unnoticing eyes of men, and whose tune is 'Fortune, my Foe, why dost thou frown,' because for the present he is condemned to sit apart inactive.

This talk about 'Fortune' was to some extent a trick of the time, and a favourite strain with Essex. Perez, the flashing foreign friend of this Earl, also indulged much in it, calling himself 'Fortune's Monster,' which was the motto he inscribed on his portrait. It is the young man of Action doomed to be a mere spectator. He has seen his fellow-nobles, the 'choicest buds of all our English blood,' go by to battle with dancing pennons and nodding plumes (as Marston describes them), floating in feather on the land as ships float on the sea, or, as Shakspeare may have described them—

> 'All furnished, all in arms,
> All plumed like estridges that wing the wind,

Bated like eagles having lately bathed;
Glittering in golden coats, like Images;
As full of spirit as the month of May,
And gorgeous as the sun at Midsummer.'

Some of them are off with Raleigh, going to do good work for England, and strike at the Spaniard a memorable stroke. The land has rung from end to end with the fame of Grenville's great deed and glorious death. A few years before Cavendish had come sailing up the river Thames with his merry mariners clad in silk; his sails of damask, and his top-masts cloth of gold; thus symbolling outwardly the richness of the prize they had wrested from the enemy. The spirit of adventure is everywhere in motion, sending

'Some to the wars, to try their fortune there;
Some to discover islands far away.'

The hearts of the young burn within them at the recital of their fathers' deeds, the men who conquered Spain in 1588, when all her proud embattled powers were broken. The after-swell of that high heaving of the national heart catches them up and sets them yearning to do some such work of noble note.

He, too, is anxious for service, wearying to mount horse and away. The stir of the time is within him, and here he is compelled to sit still. He shares the feeling of his friend Charles Blount, afterwards Lord Mountjoy, who, twice or thrice, stole away from Court, without the Queen's leave, to join Sir John Norris in Bretagne, and was reproached by Her Majesty for trying to get knocked on the head as 'that inconsiderate fellow Sidney had done.' He hears the sounds of the strife, the trumpet's 'golden cry,' the clash and clangour of the conflict, and his spirit longs to be gone and in amidst the din and dust of the arena—he who is left by the wayside, out of harness and out of heart. He feels it as a disgrace

put on him by Fortune, and looks upon himself as a lonely outcast. He is inclined to curse his fate; wishes he was of a more hopeful temperament, so that he could look on the bright side of things; see the silver lining to his cloud. If he had only friends like this one at Court to get the ear of the Queen; or if he had but the art of that one who seems to obtain all he asks for; or if he shared but the other's scope and free-play for his sword to clear a space for himself and win a prouder name for his beloved to wear. For he is deeply in love, which makes his spirit more than ever restless, and increases his sadness with its delicious pain. The thought of her is a spur to his eager spirit; for her sake he would be earning name and fame, and here he is compelled to wait wearily, watch wistfully, wish vainly, and weep over this 'dear waste' of his best time. Yet he almost despises himself for having such thoughts, when he thinks of her whose love he has won. However poor his prospect, he has the love of her rich within his soul, and is really richer than the whole world's wealth could make him. She is a prize precious above all those that glitter in imagination, and, however out of luck, self-tormented, and inclined to read 'his own fortune in his misery' of the moment, he sits in her heart; that is his throne, and he would scorn to change condition with kings.

It is the time, too, of the lover's life when sweet thoughts bring a feeling of sadness, and he is apt to water his wine of love a little with tears, and find it none the less sweet. The heart, being so tender to this new present of love, grows more tender in thinking of the past, and seems to feel its old sorrows truly for the first time. The transfiguring touch of this fresh spring of love puts a new green on the old graves of the heart; this precious gain of the lover's enriches also his sense of loss, and to the silent sessions of sweet thought it calls up the remembrance of things past, the old forms of the loved and the lost rise from

their grave of years in 'soft attire,' and he can weep who is unaccustomed to shed tears. All his troubles come gathering on him together, and he grieves over 'grievances forgone;' wails over the old long-since cancelled woes anew, and pays once more the sad account of by-gone sorrows. The speaker is one who has been bereaved of his dearest and most precious friends, friends in the closest kinship. Their loss is the sorrow of a life-time, the relationship the nearest to nature, and the deaths occurred years ago. They are friends whom the speaker has greatly lacked and needed in his life. His love for them is 'dear religious love,' the tenderness and tears are reverential, the affection is high and holy. We cannot attach these friends or this feeling to Shakspeare himself by any known facts of his life. And had there been any such facts in his experience, to sing of which would interest his patron, we also are concerned to know them. In Southampton's life alone can we identify the facts and find the counterpart to these sonnets. In that we have the fullest and most particular confirmation; it matches the sonnets perfectly, point by point, through all the comparisons; it accounts for the feeling, and sets the story sombrely aglow, as if written in illuminated letters on a ground of black; gives it the real look of life and death. The Earl's father had died October 4th, 1581, when Henry Wriothesley was two days short of eight years old; and about four years afterwards his elder brother died. Here are the precious friends whom he lacked so much; here is the 'dear religious love' that made him weep such 'holy' and funereal tears; here is the precise lapse of time. And in this new love of the Earl for Elizabeth Vernon, in the year 1593–4, he finds his solace. She comes to restore the old, to replace what he has lost, to reveal all that Death had hidden away in his endless night. She is the heaven of his departed 'loves;' in her they shine down on him starrily through a mist of

tears. She gathers up in one endearing image of love his lost friends who have bequeathed to her all their share in his love, and she thus possesses the whole of him, and is the all-in-all of love to him. In her he takes his delight, just as a crippled father may rejoice to see his active child do youthful deeds, so he, being disabled or made lame by Fortune, sits apart and sees her in her pride of place wearing the rose of youth and shining grace of her beauty, and he finds all his comfort in her worth and truth. For however beautiful, virtuous, wealthy, or witty she may be, he has engrafted his love to her stock, and shares in her natural abundance of goodness, is a part in all her glory, so that he feels neither poor nor disabled nor despised. Whatever in the world is absolutely best he wishes for her, his wishes for himself are only relative. He has his wish, for she is and doth contain all that is supremely best; and this makes him feel ten times happier than if his own selfish wishes had been granted.

In these sonnets we may perceive a touch of Shakspeare's art, which peeps out in his anxiety to see his friend married. How steadily he keeps in view of the Earl, this star of his love that tops the summit and gilds the darkest night; this calm influence that is to clear his cloudy thoughts; this balm of healing for his troubled heart; this crown and comfort of his life. Also in these, the first sonnets spoken by the Earl, the poet gives us a suggestive hint of his friend's character, and reveals a presaging fear that fortune has a spite against him, of which we shall hear more yet, and which was amply illustrated in his after life. A proof that the love of Shakspeare for his friend was tender enough to be tremulous with a divining force.

> When in disgrace with Fortune, and men's eyes,
> I all alone beweep my outcast state
> And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries
> And look upon myself and curse my fate,

Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him,[1] like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on Thee,—and then my state
Like to the Lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at Heaven's gate,
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings,
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.
(29.)

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new-wail my dear time's waste:[2]
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long-since cancelled woe,[3]
And moan the expense of many a vanished sight:

[1] Rosalind, in 'As You Like It,' when making fun of the fantastical sadness of the melancholy Jacques, tells him to be 'out of love with his nativity,' and almost quarrel with God for 'making him of that *countenance*;' meaning his *national* face! Mr. Masson, who is a believer in the autobiographic theory of the sonnets, finds here exactly the same form of '*self-dissatisfaction*' as in the above sonnet. How, I do not comprehend, as it is Rosalind who says it *to* Jacques. Instead of its helping to prove that Shakspeare speaks personally in the above sonnet, and shows his own likeness to the melancholy-sucking philosopher, it does just the contrary; for it is most certain that, so far from sympathising with this pensive pretender, Shakspeare looks on him, through the eyes of the other characters, as an amusing sentimental coxcomb who conceits himself upon his sadness. Our poet had too deep a sense of the real sorrow of life to seriously countenance this affectation of melancholy—this playing at being sad. Jacques' melancholy is 'right painted cloth;' there is no heart in it; the other characters know this; but he has the trick of making assumption entertaining, and so they tolerate him. The blithe natures of the play, Rosalind, Orlando, Celia, and the banished Duke, these are the Poet's true *comates* in spirit.

[2] Shakspeare could not have *wasted* his precious time after he had once got to work in London.

[3] Southampton's father had been dead some twelve years; his brother eight years.

Then can I grieve at grievances forgone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoanéd moan,
Which I new-pay as if not paid before:
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored, and sorrows end.

(30.)

Thy bosom is endearéd with all hearts,
Which I, by lacking, have supposéd dead;
And there reigns love, and all love's loving parts,
And all those friends which I thought buriéd:
How many a holy and obsequious tear
Hath dear-religious love stolen from mine eye
As interest of the dead, which now appear
But things removed, that hidden in thee lie!
Thou art the grave where buried love doth live,
Hung with the trophies[1] of my lovers gone,
Who all their parts of me to thee did give,
That due of many now is thine alone:
Their images I loved I view in thee,
And thou, all they, hast all the all of me.

(31.)

As a decrepit father takes delight
To see his active child do deeds of youth,
So I, made lame by Fortune's dearest spite,
Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth:
For whether beauty, birth, or wealth, or wit,
Or any of these all, or all, or more
Intitled in thy parts, do crownéd sit,
I make my love ingrafted to this store:
So then I am not lame, poor, nor despised,
Whilst that this shadow doth such substance give,
That I in thy abundance am sufficed,
And by a part of all thy glory live:
Look, what is best, that best I wish in thee:
This wish I have, then ten times happy me.

(37.)

[1] 'Hung with the trophies.' An allusion to the ancient custom of hanging wreaths upon monumental statues. Here the dead have bequeathed their crowns to adorn this present image of past love.

PERSONAL SONNETS.

1594.

SHAKSPEARE TO THE EARL, WHEN HE HAS KNOWN HIM SOME THREE YEARS.

THESE two sonnets will come in here appropriately enough, because there is a date in the one which is written when the Poet has known his friend three years, and because the fragment is on the same subject. As the second was unfinished, we may suppose it was never sent, but that it remained among the loose papers given by the Poet to Herbert, who put it in at the end of the Southampton sonnets, and thus divided them from the latter series. Time and subject determine its present place.

To me, fair friend, you never can be old,
For as you were when first your eye I eyed,
Such seems your beauty still: three winters' cold
Have from the forests shook three summers' pride;
Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turned
In process of the seasons have I seen,
Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burned,
Since first I saw you fresh which yet are green:
Ah! yet doth beauty, like a dial-hand,
Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived;
So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand,
Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceived;
For fear of which, hear this, thou age unbred;
Ere you were born was Beauty's summer dead.

O thou, my lovely Boy, who in thy power
Dost hold Time's fickle glass, his sickle-hour;
Who hast by waning grown, and therein showest
Thy lovers withering as thy sweet self growest!
If Nature, sov'reign mistress over wrack,
As thou goest onwards still will pluck thee back,
She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill
May Time disgrace, and wretched minutes kill:
Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure;
She may detain, but not still keep her treasure:
Her audit, tho' delayed, answered must be,
And her quietus is to render thee!

(126.)

A PERSONAL SONNET.

SHAKSPEARE PROPOSES TO WRITE OF THE EARL IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD.

In this sonnet an absence is contemplated. Not an absence of the Poet, but of the Earl. And the Poet proposed to take advantage of this separation to sing of his friend, and thus try to do his subject justice. To praise his friend whilst they are together is somewhat absurd, because they are so much one that it is like praising himself. Even for this, for his modesty's sake, he says, let us be divided by distance, if by nothing else, so that he can, as it were, hold his friend, the better part of himself, at arm's length, to look on his virtues and praise his worth, and give that due to him which is the friend's alone. This sonnet establishes the fact that the Earl is about to go abroad or to leave home, and that Shakspeare intends to sing of him, to write about him, in his absence. He stops at home —'here'—to sing of him who 'doth *hence* remain.' It is a somewhat fantastic excuse for a parting, and very different to the real parting that has to come.

SHAKSPEARE TO THE EARL, WHO IS LEAVING ENGLAND.

O, how thy worth with manners may I sing,
When thou art all the better part of me?
What can mine own praise to mine own self bring?
And what is't but mine own when I praise thee?

Even for this let us divided live,
And our dear love lose name of single one,
That by this separation I may give
That due to thee, which thou deserv'st alone!
Oh, Absence,[1] what a torment would'st thou prove,
Were it not thy sour image gave sweet leave
To entertain the time with thoughts of love,
Which time and thoughts so sweetly doth deceive,
And that thou teachest how to make one twain,
By praising him here, who doth hence remain.

(39.)

[1] The Earl's absence; Shakspeare would not speak thus of his own, and of its proving a torment to his friend! This absence of the Earl also *teaches* the Poet how to write of his friend when he is away; gives him his cue for the following sonnets.

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

1595.

THE EARL TO MISTRESS VERNON ON AND IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD.

It was in May 1595 that, according to Mr. Standen, the Earl of Southampton had got into disgrace at Court, and that Elizabeth Vernon and her *ill good man* waited upon her irate Majesty to know her resolution in the matter, and her Majesty sent out word to say firmly that she was *sufficiently resolved.* In September of the same year, White tells us that the Earl of Southampton has been courting the fair Mistress Vernon *with too much familiarity*; the meaning of which is too plain for comment. The Queen's resolve was, without doubt, that Southampton should leave the Court in consequence. The following sonnets tell the story of his parting, his absence, and the cause of both. The cause is something he has done, for which he holds himself solely guilty. He admits that they must be twain, although they are one in love. The parting is imposed on them by a separating spite. This parting will not change their feeling toward each other, though it will steal sweet hours from their delight by the compulsory absence. He may not call her his any more, lest the guilt which he bewails should shame her, nor must she notice him for others to see, else it will be to her own

dishonour. He loves her so that her good report is his, and rather than endanger it further, he accepts the enforced parting as necessary for her sake. In this way those blots that remain with him shall be borne by him alone, without her having to share the burden of his blame. The rest of these sonnets are so arranged as to tell the progress and incidents of the journey that followed the parting. Leaving his beloved, he journeys heavily on his way; the horse bears him slowly, as if it were conscious that his rider was in no haste, and it felt the weight of his woe. Thus thinking of his grief that lies before and his joy behind, he can excuse the slow pace of his steed. But, if he were returning to his beloved, what excuse could his horse then find?

> 'Then should I spur tho' mounted on the wind;
> In wingéd speed no motion shall I know.'

He would come back on wings of desire; no horse could keep pace with him. His desire should neigh, that is, *salute*, no dull flesh—as his horse is in the habit of doing—in his fiery race. Since he left her, his eyes are in his mind, and she so occupies his mind that the eyes lose their proper functions, and see everything in the likeness of that mental image. His mind being 'crowned with her' is monarch of the eyes, and rules them at its pleasure. His most true mind thus makes the eyes see outward things untruly. Weary with the daily march, he hastens to bed at night; but not to sleep. The mental journey now begins; his mind travels back to her 'from far,' where he is staying:—

> 'Lo, thus by day my limbs, by night my mind,
> For thee, and for myself, no quiet find.'

How can he then return in 'happy plight' to renew his travel, who has no benefit of rest? Night shows her to him in vision; the day takes him farther and farther away

from her. He tells them stories of his love and of her beauty, to wile away the time. It is all in vain. For the day still draws out the distance longer and longer, and the night doth nightly make stronger that length of grief spun out by day. Sonnet 7 borders in idea upon sonnets 3 and 4 of the group. He sees best when he shuts his eyes. Her image in his mind shines with such splendour that it makes the night luminous and the day dark. Is it her will, he asks, to keep his eyes open, his mind awake, to mock him with shadows of herself? Or does she send her spirit so far from home to pry into his deeds:—

> 'To find out shames and idle hours in me,
> The scope and tenor of *thy jealousy*?'

Oh, no! he says, it is not her love nor her jealousy, but his own, that keep him awake and on the fret:—

> 'For thee watch I whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,
> From me far off, *with others all too near*.'

This brings the very natural thought of his care, on leaving home, in securing his jewels and locking up his trifles; and he has left this precious jewel of his love exposed as the unprotected prey of every common thief. Her he could not lock up, except in his heart. If he could be all spirit now, and move swift as thought, then the great and perilous distance that lies between them should not stop him. In spite of space, he would come from the distant shores, 'limits far remote,' to the place where his beloved stays! But, as he cannot come himself, he sends his thought and his yearnings in tender embassy of love to her, and these swift messengers, on returning, tell him of her 'fair health.' These go to and fro continually. Then he tries to give an ingenious turn to the enforced absence. He makes it look as though he had a choice in the matter, and the separation was only to put a finer point upon the pleasure of meeting. He is rich in a locked-up possession, of which he keeps the key; but he will not look in upon

his treasure too often, lest it should dull his sense of the preciousness, make the privilege too common. The 'time that keeps' the beloved is his 'chest,' or jewel-casket; or rather it is the wardrobe that hides the robe which is to make blest some special moment by a fresh unfolding of the shut-up richness:—

> 'Blessed are you whose worthiness gives scope,
> Being had—to Triumph; being lacked—to Hope!'

The reader cannot fail to feel how these sonnets dilate with life when spoken by a lover to his absent mistress. Thus interpreted, they are unfathomably beautiful; the beauty reaching its best in sonnets 48 and 52. How much nearer to nature they nestle when we know the yearnings are womanward! This gives to them the true bitter-sweet. How tender and true and *naïvely* winsome is the expression! How deep-hearted the love! The dramatic mood shows the Poet to us likest himself; the poetry kindles with a new dawn, and breathes the aroma of Shakspeare's sweetest love-lines; it takes us into a presence akin to that of Perdita and Viola, Helena and Imogen, and the rest of those fragrant-natured women whom he 'loved into being;' this veiled presence which has so perplexed us when told that all these tender perfections of poetry, caresses of feeling, and daintinesses of expression were lavished on a man, and the natural instinct fought against the seeming fact, is the presence of Elizabeth Vernon. It is she who has been so long buried alive in the sonnets; smothered up in their sweets. 'See how she 'gins to blow into Life's flower again;' as we let in a breath of fresh air!

THE LOVERS' PARTING.

Let me confess that we two must be twain,[1]
Altho' our undivided loves are one:

[1] So Pandarus to Helen, speaking of Cressid and Paris, says, 'She'll none of him; *they two are twain.*'

So shall those blots that do with me remain
Without thy help by me be borne alone:
In our two loves there is but one respect,
Tho' in our lives a separable spite.
Which tho' it alter not love's sole effect,
Yet doth it steal sweet hours from love's delight:
I may not evermore acknowledge thee,
Lest my bewailéd guilt should do thee shame,
Nor thou with public kindness honour me,
Unless thou take that honour from thy name:
But do not so, I love thee in such sort,
As, thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

(36.)

THE EARL'S JOURNEY.

How heavy do I journey on the way,
When what I seek—my weary travel's end—
Doth teach that ease and that repose to say
'*Thus far the miles are measured from thy friend!*' [1]
The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,
Plods dully on, to bear that weight in me,
As if by some instinct the wretch did know
His rider loved not speed being made from thee:
The bloody spur cannot provoke him on
That sometimes anger thrusts into his hide
Which heavily he answers with a groan
More sharp to me than spurring to his side:
For that same groan doth put this in my mind;
My grief lies onward, and my joy behind.[2]

(50.)

[1] So Bolingbroke, when going into banishment, says—

'Every tedious stride I make
Will but remember me what a deal of world
I wander from the jewels that I love.'—*Richard II.*, act i. sc. 3.

[2] 'My *grief lies onward* and my joy behind.'

Had Shakspeare been on his way to visit his wife and family at Stratford, which has been supposed, he must have been in a most dolorous condition. His return home was not a pleasant prospect, (and why, then, should he have gone?) if he felt thus that he was going to grief! But it is difficult to imagine that Southampton would care for such an equivocal compliment at the expense of Shakspeare's wife and little ones, to say nothing of the Poet's want of manliness which a personal reading would imply.

Thus can my love excuse the slow offence
Of my dull bearer, when from thee I speed;
From where thou art why should I haste me thence?
Till I return, of posting is no need:
O, what excuse will my poor beast then find,
When swift extremity can seem but slow?
Then should I spur tho' mounted on the wind;
In wingéd speed no motion shall I know:
Then can no horse with my desire keep pace;
Therefore Desire, of perfect'st love being made,
Shall neigh no dull flesh in his fiery race,[1]
But love, for love, shall thus excuse my jade—
Since from thee going he went wilful slow,
Towards thee I'll run, and give him leave to go.

(51.)

Since I left you mine eye is in my mind,
And that which governs me to go about
Doth part his function, and is partly blind,
Seems seeing, but effectually is out;
For it no form delivers to the heart,
Of bird, of flower, or shape which it doth latch;

1 'Shall *neigh* no dull flesh in his fiery race.'

Malone thought the expression of this line so uncouth that he laboured to alter it. He printed the line thus—

'Shall neigh (no dull flesh) in his fiery race;'

in which shape it has generally been printed since. He still suspected the line to be corrupt, and thought perhaps it should read—

'*Shall* neigh TO dull flesh in his fiery race;'

meaning that 'Desire, in the ardour of impatience, should call to the sluggish animal (the horse) to proceed with swifter motion.' Steevens opines 'the sense may be this—therefore desire, being no *dull piece of horseflesh*, but composed of the most perfect love, shall neigh as he proceeds in his hot career.' Yet the Quarto was perfectly right, and the meaning quite plain. The image is used by one who rides a horse among horses, and horses are in the habit of neighing when they salute each other; they will do this, too, if speed be ever so important. And the writer says, his desire being made of perfectest love, having nothing animal about it, shall not *salute* any dull flesh in his fiery race; only he continues the use of the image by means of the word '*neigh*.' Perhaps the Poet was thinking of the words of the prophet Jeremiah—'They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife.'

Of his quick objects hath the mind no part,
Nor his own vision holds what it doth catch;
For if it see the rud'st or gentlest sight,
The most sweet favour or deformed'st creature,
The mountain or the sea, the day or night,
The crow or dove, it shapes them to your feature:
Incapable of more, replete with you,
My most true mind thus makes mine eye untrue.[1]

(113.)

Or whether doth my mind, being crown'd with you,
Drink up the Monarch's plague, this flattery?
Or whether shall I say mine eye saith true,
And that your love taught it this alchemy,
To make of monsters and things indigest
Such cherubins as your sweet self resemble,
Creating every bad a perfect best,
As fast as objects to his beams assemble?
Oh, 'tis the first; 'tis flattery in my seeing,
And my great mind most kingly drinks it up;
Mine eye well knows what with his gust is 'greeing,
And to his palate doth prepare the cup:
If it be poisoned, 'tis the lesser sin
That mine eye loves it and doth first begin.[2]

(114.)

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tired;
But then begins a journey in my head
To work my mind when body's work's expired:
For then my thoughts (from far, where I abide)
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
Looking on darkness which the blind do see:

[1] The Quarto reads—

'*My most true mind thus maketh mine untrue.*'

But an opposition is intended betwixt the mental and the visual sight; 'mind' and 'eye' are repeated thrice in this sense in the next sonnet.

[2] It is possible that this and the preceding sonnet refer to a later journey, but they will find a fit place with the other sonnets spoken by the Earl in his absence.

Save that my soul's imaginary sight
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new:[1]
Lo, thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind
For thee, and for myself, no quiet find.

(27.)

How can I then return in happy plight,
That am debarred the benefit of rest?
When Day's oppression is not eased by Night,
But Day by Night and Night by Day oppressed;
And each, tho' enemies to either's reign,
Do in consent shake hands to torture me,
The one by toil, the other to complain
How far I toil; still farther off from thee:
I tell the Day, to please him, thou art bright,
And dost him grace when clouds do blot the heaven:
So flatter I the swart-complexioned Night,
When sparkling stars tire[2] not, thou gild'st the Even:[3]
But Day doth daily draw my sorrows longer,
And Night doth nightly make grief's length seem stronger.

(28.)

[1] 'It seems she hangs upon the cheek of Night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear.'

This is *spoken of a woman by her lover* in 'Romeo and Juliet.'

[2] 'When sparkling stars *tire* not.'

The Quarto reads, 'When sparkling stars *twire* not,' and the word 'twire' has much puzzled the commentators. Steevens thinks 'twire' may have the same signification as *quire*, or it is a corruption. He guesses that 'twink' may be meant, for twinkle. Malone suggests that we should read 'when sparkling stars "*twirl*" not.' The word 'twire' means motion of a peculiar kind. In Chaucer it is applied to the intermitted sounds of a bird. Twyreth (says Skinner), is interpreted singeth. Drayton has the word. He says 'the sun with fervent eye looks thro' the *twyring* glades;' by which I take it he means the blades of grass thrilling in the wind. A very characteristic motion of short glade-grass! In Beaumont and Fletcher we find, 'I saw the wench that *twired* and twinkled at thee.' Ben Jonson has it, 'Which maids will *twire* at 'tween their fingers thus!' Hence Gifford's explanation of the word is 'to leer affectedly.' Fancy a star leering affectedly! In Marston's 'Antonio and Mellida' (act iv. first part), one of the characters is in search of another who is hiding, and he says, 'I saw a thing stir under a hedge, and I peeped and I spied a thing, and I peered, and I *tweered* underneath.' By which we see that it is not used either for

[3]

When most I wink then do mine eyes best see,
For all the day they view things unrespected:
But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,
And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed!
Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright,
How would thy shadow's form form happy show
To the clear day with thy much clearer light,
When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so?
How would—I say—mine eyes be blessed made
By looking on thee in the living day,
When in dead night thy fair, imperfect shade
Thro' heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay?
All days are nights to see till I see thee:
And nights bright days when dreams do shew thee me.
(43.)

Is it thy will thine image should keep open
My heavy eyelids to the weary night?
Dost thou desire my slumbers should be broken,
Whilst shadows like to thee do mock my sight?

peeping or peering, but for the motion made in doing both. Again, Beaumont and Fletcher apply it to the braying of an ass:—'Ye are an ass, a *twire*-pipe!' So that, whether of sound or bodily motion, it signifies an intermittent movement. No word could more admirably express the motion of a snipe, but it is nowhere used to describe the twinkling of a star; such an application is the result of our feeling back for the meaning of the word 'twire,' through our sense of the word twitter. To twire, so to say, describes a larger zig-zag of motion than to twitter, and is undoubtedly the *a. s.* 'thwyrian,' to wrest, to twist, to put out of a straight course, to swerve from a straight line. Therefore I conclude that Shakspeare did not write when 'sparkling stars *twire* not,' which, so far as 'twire' means motion, would be saying 'when sparkling stars do not sparkle.' The word he used would be sure to add to the line in another sense. And he does not need a word to express movement at all, but a still splendour. 'Thou *gild'st* the even!' So I doubt not that he wrote 'when sparkling stars *tire* not;' *i.e.* when they adorn not. The *tire*-man and *tire*-room made the phrase familiar, and the act of *tiring* or dressing for the night gave to it a natural touch. He uses the same word in the same sense in 'Venus and Adonis,' stanza 30—'And Titan *tired* in the mid-day heat.'

> 'Thou gild'st the Even,
> Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
> Having some business, do entreat her eyes
> To twinkle in their spheres till they return.'

This is *spoken of a woman by a lover* in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream.'

Is it thy spirit that thou send'st from thee
So far from home into my deeds to pry,
To find out shames and idle hours in me,
The scope and tenor of thy jealousy?
Oh, no, thy love, tho' much, is not so great,
It is my love that keeps mine eye awake:
Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat,
To play the watchman ever for thy sake:
For thee watch I whilst thou dost watch elsewhere,
From me far off, with others all too near!

(61.)

How careful was I, when I took my way,
Each trifle under truest bars to thrust,
That to my use it might unuséd stay
From hands of falsehood, in sure wards of trust:
But thou, to whom my jewels[1] trifles are,
Most worthy comfort, now my greatest grief,
Thou best of dearest, and mine only care,
Art left the prey of every vulgar thief!
Thee have I not locked up in any chest,
Save where thou art not, tho' I feel thou art,
Within the gentle closure of my breast,
From whence at pleasure thou may'st come and part;
And even thence thou wilt be stolen, I fear,
For truth proves thievish for a prize so dear.

(48.)

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,
Injurious distance should not stop my way,
For then, despite of space, I would be brought
From limits far remote, where thou dost stay,[2]
No matter then altho' my foot did stand
Upon the farthest earth removed from thee,

[1] 'My jewels.' So Bertram, in 'All's Well that Ends Well,' when preparing for a journey, says—

'I have writ my letters, *casketed my treasure.*'

It may be assumed that Shakspeare's own jewels at the period of writing were hardly worth mentioning to a nobleman.

[2] *i.e.* I would be brought from 'limits far remote' where I am, on distant shores, *to* where thou dost stay, at home.

For nimble thought can jump both sea and land,
As soon as think the place where he would be:
But, ah! thought kills me that I am not thought,
To leap large length of miles[1] when thou art gone,[2]
But that so much of earth and water wrought
I must attend Time's leisure with my moan;
Receiving nought by elements so slow
But heavy tears, badges of either's woe.

(44.)

The other two, slight Air and purging Fire,
Are both with thee, wherever I abide;
The first my thought, the other my desire,
These present, absent with swift motion slide:[3]
For when these quicker elements are gone
In tender embassy of love to thee,
My life being made of four, with two alone
Sinks down to death oppressed with melancholy,
Until life's composition be recured
By those swift messengers returned from thee,[4]
Who even but now come back again, assured
Of thy fair health, recounting it to me!
This told I joy, but then no longer glad,
I send them back again, and straight grow sad.

(45.)

So am I as the rich, whose blesséd key
Can bring him to his sweet, uplockéd treasure,

[1] 'To leap large lengths of miles.'

So in 'King John'—

'Large lengths of seas and shores
Between my father and my mother lay.'

[2] 'When thou art gone.' When her image, seen in vision, has vanished.

[3] This line is usually and absurdly printed—

'These *present-absent* with swift motion slide.'

Shakspeare never devised such a condition as '*present-absent*'; what he says is, 'These, when present, become instantly absent.'

[4] The twin-likeness of these lines may be found in Valentine's letter to Sylvia ('Two Gentlemen of Verona'), beginning—

'My thoughts do harbour with my Silvia nightly';

which similar strain is, of course, addressed from man to woman!

The which he will not every hour survey,
For blunting the fine point of seldom pleasure:
Therefore are feasts so solemn and so rare,
Since, seldom coming, in the long year set
Like stones of worth they thinly placéd are,
Or captain jewels in the carcanet:
So is the time that keeps you as my chest,
Or as the wardrobe which the robe doth hide,
To make some special instant special blest,
By new unfolding his imprisoned pride:
Blesséd are you whose worthiness gives scope,
Being had—to triumph; being lacked—to hope!
(52.)

We have no grounds for supposing that Shakspeare ever undertook a 'journey' like this; no conclusive reason to believe that he was ever out of England. Here is a man on his travels, performing a long and wearying journey day by day on horseback. Day after day he toils on farther and farther away from the person addressed. In sonnet 27, he is so far distant as to speak of his thoughts making a pilgrimage home again. In sonnet 44 he is at *limits far remote*, which must mean distant shores; also the sonnet suggests that both sea and land lie between the two persons who are this perilous distance apart. It was a journey, too, for which considerable preparation had to be made; long time of absence was contemplated, and the speaker's property placed in 'sure wards of trust.' There is a hint of banishment, of an enforced absence in:—

'I must *attend Time's leisure* with my moan.'

This cannot be Shakspeare on his way to Stratford. And if it were possible for it to be him on his travels abroad, then the person addressed, the stay-at-home, could not be Southampton.

PERSONAL SONNETS.

1595.

SHAKSPEARE OF THE EARL IN HIS ABSENCE.

THESE three sonnets are spoken by Shakspeare to the Earl, during his absence from England. At first sight they may appear to belong to those spoken by the Earl to his mistress. They have the look of a lover fondling the miniature of his beloved, and rejoicing that in her absence he has at least her portrait to dote on and dally with. But lines 10 and 11 of the third sonnet, show that *it is the person addressed who is away, and on the move*; not the speaker. He says his thoughts will follow his friend, no matter how far. Also, with a closer look we may see that the picture is not a real portrait. The poet says his eye has *played* the painter and engraved the image in his heart. The picture that can be seen in sleep must be mental. It is this visionary portrait of the Earl for the possession of which the eyes and heart contend. A picture that hangs in his 'bosom's shop,' not at the print-seller's. It is the banquet that is *painted*, not the picture. All is air-drawn and impalpable, or it would lack sufficient scope for the play of fancy, the contention of heart and eye which ends in such a loving league of amity. The three sonnets are obviously suggested by the 23rd of Drayton's Sonnets.[1]

1 'Whilst yet mine eyes do surfeit with delight,
My woful heart imprisoned in my breast
Wisheth to be transformèd to my sight,
That it, like those, by looking, might be blest;

Mine eye hath played the painter, and hath stell'd[1]
Thy beauty's form in table of my heart;
My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,
And perspective it is best painter's art:
For thro' the painter must you see his skill,
To find where your true image pictured lies,
Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,
That hath his windows glazéd with thine eyes:
Now see what good turns eyes for eyes have done!
Mine eyes have drawn thy shape, and thine for me
Are windows to my breast, wherethro' the sun
Delights to peep, to gaze therein on thee;
Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their art—
They draw but what they see, know not the heart.

(24.)

Mine eye and heart are at a mortal war,
How to decide the conquest of thy sight;
Mine eye my heart thy picture's sight would bar,
My heart mine eye the freedom of that right
My heart doth plead that thou in him dost lie,
(A closet never pierced with crystal eyes)
But the defendant doth that plea deny,
And says, in him thy fair appearance lies;
To 'cide this title is impanelléd
A 'quest of thoughts, all tenants to the heart,
And by their verdict is determinéd
The clear eye's moiety, and the dear heart's part:
As thus,—mine eye's due is thine outward part:
And my heart's right thine inward love of heart.

(46.)

But, whilst mine eyes thus greedily do gaze,
Finding their objects evermore depart,
These now the other's happiness do praise,
Wishing themselves that they had been my heart:
That eyes were heart, or that the heart were eyes,
As covetous the others' use to have;
But, finding Nature their request denies,
This to each other mutually they crave,
That since the one cannot the other be,
That eyes could think of that my heart could see.'

[1] 'Stelled.' Probably fixed. In 'King Lear' the stars are called the 'stelled fires.'

Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took,
And each doth good turns now unto the other;
When that mine eye is famished for a look,
Or heart in love with sighs himself doth smother,
With my love's picture then mine eye doth feast,
And to the painted banquet bids my heart:
Another time mine eye is my heart's guest,
And in his thoughts of love doth share a part;
So, either by thy picture or my love,
Thyself away art present still with me,
For thou not farther than my thoughts canst move,
And I am still with them, and they with thee:
Or, if they sleep, thy picture in my sight
Awakes my heart to heart's and eye's delight.

(47.)

THE

DARK STORY OF THE SONNETS.

ONE of the decisive battles of the sonnets has to be fought around the next group which I have entitled, '*Elizabeth Vernon's jealousy of the Earl and her friend Lady Rich.*' It is here the personal theorists feel themselves most safely entrenched, and altogether unassailable. It is here they so triumphantly lift the vulturine nose and snuff the carrion that infects the air. They have no misgivings that the scent may be carried in their own nostrils. And when one ventures to doubt whether the vulturine nose be the best of all possible guides in a matter which demands the most delicate discrimination, the nicest intuition, the vulturine nose is forthwith elevated in disgust and scorn. Why, the facts are as plain, to them, as the nose in their face. If there be one fact patent in the sonnets, it is that Shakspeare was a scamp and a blackguard, and that he told all the world so, only the world has been too bigoted to believe him. If you hint that there may be another reading possible; one that is compatible with the poet's purity, they think you very good to say so; very good indeed, excessively amiable; but you are too youthful, too simple, and unripe. 'Such a view is perfectly untenable to us who know the sonnets.' By *knowing* the sonnets, they mean accepting all the squinting constructions which show the moral obliquity of Shakspeare. The devil's own smile of paternal

pity could not exceed their look of kindly commiseration, and superb patronage with which they treat your want of worldly wisdom. 'Ah, you do not allow for human nature's frailties. Prove or assume what you please of the other sonnets; of one thing we are certain, and whosoever does not see that Shakspeare, invisible as he was on all other sides, has here given us a full view of his baser part, knows nothing whatever about the subject.' And so Shakspeare is to be made appear to the world as an unconscionable debauchée in his life, a hypocrite in his protestations of affection, and a stark fool in his confessions, in order that these keen-eyed and keener-scented critics may look wondrous wise. But, was our poet such a fool? Are these critics so wise? They have no doubts on either point; I have more than misgivings on both. But to the story.

It has been assumed, and unhesitatingly put forth, that Shakspeare, having a wife at Stratford, kept a mistress in London. The chief advocate of this theory gives a finishing smack of satisfaction to his reading by remarking thus:—'May no person be inclined on this account to condemn him with a bitterness equal to their own virtue. For myself, I confess I have not the heart to blame him at all—purely because he so keenly reproaches himself for his own sin and folly.' This lady held the Poet captive with all the fierce tyranny of Circe of old. It has even been conjectured that she was an Italian, possibly the wife of some merchant-prince of Venice, if not the wife of the Venetian Ambassador. It is further supposed that the Poet obtained his release from her influence when his young friend Southampton or 'Mr. W. H.' became her prey, and then the lady passed away into the realm of the Poet's imagination, to become the ideal of his bolder black-eyed beauties. For there is no doubt that the lady was black-eyed and had black hair, with a most swarthy complexion. The Poet, however, did not give her up to

his friend without a fierce struggle for her, during which he flung about him such wildfire words as scarred the guilty couple and his own fair fame for ever. Now, if there were any sure grounds for such a story, I should feel bound to face it. We ought not to lie about Shakspeare *because* we love him. We should have no right to alter any known fact of his life. And so anxious are we to lay hold on him to look into his mortal face, that we could almost gladly clutch any part of his human skirts, even if the hem had trailed somewhat in the mire. It might have been pleasant too could we have proved that he had such failings and errors as afforded a satisfactory set-off to his splendour—the foil which should render his glory less dazzling to weak eyes. There are tastes that would have appreciated his fame all the more for a taint in it! Besides we all know what mad things Love has done in this world; that while he can see so clearly on behalf of others, he is so often blind for self. We know how this passion has coloured some lump of common earth like the human clay fresh from Eden, bright with God's latest touch; how it has clothed spiritual deformity with splendour and grace; how it has discrowned the kingly men and made fools of the wise ones; covered a David with shame; snatched the empire of a world from Anthony; made great heroes lay down their heads and leave their laurels in a wanton's lap; set the wits of many a poor poet dancing like those of a lunatic. Shakspeare with his ripe physical nature, fine animal spirits, and magnificent pulse of rich life, might have been one victim more. He might have been! But, was he? And has he written sonnets to record the mutual shame of himself and that friend whom he professed to love with a love 'passing the love of woman,' and strove to image forth for endless honour?

There is pretty good proof that these sonnets and their story were not personal to Shakspeare; that they do not

relate to anything deeply and desperately guilty, or we should hardly find one of them in print so early as 1599. There could be no great reason why it should not have gone out of our prudent Poet's hands, or he would not have let it go. That we do find it in print shows it was written for a purpose, having to do with the 'sonnets among his private friends,' and that the secret was of no great moment even to them, or they would have kept it better. And once the sonnet was in print, if it had told anything, as in a glass darkly, against the fair fame of Shakspeare—if there had been such a story as modern ingenuity has discovered, we may be sure there were eyes sharp enough amongst the Poet's contemporaries to have spied it out, and made the most of it. His friendship with Southampton was known. His sonnets were read with interest. Yet there is not a whisper against him. And why but because it was understood that they *were* sonnets, not personal confessions, but sonnets on subjects chosen or given? It was not strange in 1599 that a great dramatic poet should write dramatically in his sonnets. And there was nothing suspicious in the Poet's life or personal bearing to cause the lynx-eyed to pry, no summons issued for a feast of the vultures; neither when this sonnet or the book of sonnets was printed, nor when the writer himself was dead and his grave had become the fair mark for a foul bird. No one rakes there for rottenness; no one ventures to deposit dirt there. No doubt the Elizabethans had as keen a scent for a scandal as the Victorians may have, and liked their game to be as high; such things as our Poet has been supposed to charge himself with could not have escaped, unnoticed and unknown. In this world it is easy enough at any period of history, and in any station of life, for some of the personal virtues to be overlooked by whole 'troops of unrecording friends.' These may nestle and make sweet some small breathing-space of life, and pass away without

being remembered in gilt letters. But the Vices! That is quite a different matter. And such vices too in such a man as Shakspeare, who was watched by so many jealous looks on the part of those who used the pen and could prick sharply with it. His vices could not have nestled out of sight quite so cleverly if he himself had taken pains to endorse them publicly. But there is not an ill-breath breathed against the moral reputation of our Poet, either from rival dramatist or chronicler of scandal, in all the letters of the time. Now character is evidence in any properly constituted court of justice. Not as against facts, but as an element in the right interpretation of them. Here, however, there are no facts to array against the character, only inferences, whereas the character stands irremoveably fixed, with all the facts for buttresses around it.

But for the sake of argument, let us suppose the sonnets to tell such a story: that the story was founded on a reality in our Poet's life, and that his young friend did really rob him of his Mistress. How are we to reconcile the fact of Shakspeare having written sonnets on purpose to proclaim the grievous errors of himself and his friend, and given an eternal tarnish to that fair affection of theirs, with the feeling that runs through all the personal sonnets, the desire to paint this friend in the loveliest colours, and set up an image of him that should win the world's love and admiration for all time?

Shakspeare's great object in composing the Southampton Sonnets, was to do honour to the Earl, to show him gratitude, respect, love, and to embalm his beauty, moral and physical, for posterity. Not to drag him in the dirt and hold him up to infamy—himself to execration. In every personal glimpse we get, we see a man who feels a most fatherly affection for his young friend. He counsels like a father. He respects the marriage ties, and is anxious to see his '*dear boy*' throned in the purest seat

of honour, the sanctity of a Home that is blessed with a wife and children. His spirit hovers about his 'dear boy' as on wings of love, in the most protecting way; he warns, he comforts, he cheers him. He begs that he will be as wary for himself as *he will be for him.* The supreme object of his writing is to win *honour* for the Earl. He fondly hopes by-and-by to *publicly show himself worthy of the Earl's sweet respect.* In his dedication to the first poem he promises to *honour* him with some graver labour. His verse is to EXALT him in life, and in death it shall be his '*gentle* monument,' the 'living record' of his memory. It is meant to *distill* the sweetness of the friend's life, worth, truth, and beauty; not to surround him with an ill odour.

> 'To *no other pass my verses tend*
> *Than of your graces and your gifts to tell.*'

In these his monument shall 'shine more bright than unswept stone,' and 'gainst death and all-oblivious enmity shall you pace forth, your praise shall still find room,' as the noble of nature's own crowning; the man whom Shakspeare delighted to love and respect. These sonnets are to stand to future times for the primal purpose of showing the Earl's worth. And if his dear friend ever looks at them after the Poet is gone, he is to find there the very part, the 'better part,' of Shakspeare that was consecrated to him. The object, I repeat, is to set the Earl forth unparagoned, to consecrate not to desecrate their affection, and the spirit of the writer is one of the utmost purity and loving regard. To him the Earl is the subject of kind thoughts, pure thoughts, high thoughts, a hundred times proclaimed. And in sonnet 71 he says, 'I love you so that when I am gone I would have you forget me altogether, rather than my death should cause you a pang of sorrow.' Not anything he had done or said in his life!

And, in the last of the personal sonnets addressed to Southampton on his release from prison, there is no change in his regards, except that the affection has increased and ripened with time. Moreover, we see, right through the sonnets, from the first to this latter one, that Shakspeare has most absolutely kept the loftiest moral altitude. He has preserved his own purity and integrity of soul to have the right of speaking to the Earl as he does at times. For example, in sonnet 70, where he defends the youth against some slander, and bears testimony that his life presents a 'pure unstained prime.' He has kept sacred his right of affection to express his sadness when the Earl does associate with evil companions, and allow 'sin to lace itself with his society,' and he bewails most touchingly that his fame should grow common, that evil tongues should be permitted to wag at his name. Now, these sonnets which we speak of *are personal*; we know and can prove them to be so, because he who *speaks* in them can be identified as the man who *writes them.* On this personal stand-point we may take our ground, and we shall find that through all the personal sonnets the character is one and self-consistent, and the likest possible to that of the Shakspeare whom we know by all other report of his contemporaries, and through his works. Here we are able to identify the Man Shakspeare by his own voice, and we can prove that in these sonnets, which *are* personal, there is no hint, not one word of suggestion that Shakspeare was, or could be, guilty of any such sins as have been laid to his charge. Not one self-reproach for being in any way the cause of his friend's errors, or loss of reputation. He speaks of his own death, but there is no regret for aught that he has done in companionship with the Earl. When he is dead he asks the Earl to forget him, and why? Because he is shamed by his writings, not by his life. If, he pleads, the Earl should desert him for the rival poet, and he is cast away, the worst is this, 'My love was my decay'—

his love for the Earl, not for a bad woman. And it is useless for any one to reply that the disreputable affair may have occurred after some of the sonnets were written, for this pure and lofty tone is the dominant one up to the sonnet of 1603. Whereas, if there had been any such grievous error shared in common by poet and peer, it must have been in the earliest stage of their acquaintance-ship, when, as the Poet would be made to say, his friend had only been his for *one hour*. In fact, the Poet must have been keeping a mistress at the very time he was writing those beautiful sonnets in praise of marriage. Yet we find there is not one word of contrition or self-reproach; no single reference to his own breach of the moral law, or marriage tie, in all the sage and solemn personal sonnets which show us Shakspeare's own soul. How could our Poet, who had so warmly advocated 'husbandry in honour' for the Earl, have written sonnets for the purpose of picturing the married man and his boy-friend as rivals for the embrace of a mistress; and thus publicly proclaimed his own dishonour? How could he have been sensitive to the least whisper of ill-fame that was breathed against the Earl, and bewail the pity of his growing common in the mouths of men, if he himself had been in the stews with him, and done his best to perpetuate the fact by recording the most damning testimony? How could he have charged his young friend with deception, baseness, and ill-deeds, when, if such things had been true, he would have been first in doing these very offences—ten-fold worse in doing them, and a thousand-fold worse in writing of them? How could he remonstrate with the Earl on his evil courses, warn him about his health, and charge him with gracing impiety with his presence, if he had been the guilty partner in his fall? How could he think his beloved would show 'like an Idol,' if he had laboured so sedulously to flaw the image he had set up, and so befouled it with dirt? How

should he live in the eyes of posterity as the express image of beauty, truth, and natural nobleness, if he had denounced his moral deformity, reproached him bitterly for his falsehood, and devoted passionate sonnets to register his degradation? Such a view of Shakspeare's character is insanely absurd. It is not possible that he should have shown his love, or sought to honour the Earl in any such way. It would indeed have been embalming the life, inscribing the monument, and 'showing his head' worthily, so as to prove his love, with a vengeance! And from all we know and hear of the man—gather from the aim and object of the sonnets—see of his knowledge of human nature, his instinct for law, his sincerity and fidelity to his friends—we are compelled to indignantly spurn a theory that demands such a sacrifice of truth and probability. We would rather believe what Shakspeare himself has said than what any of his commentators have surmised. Any one who can think that our Poet would be guilty of such a sacrilege to that sacred sweetness of friendship which he had felt so intimately and brooded over so lovingly, can never have drawn near to the spirit of Shakspeare, and apprehended its uprightness and sincereness—its lofty chivalry and sense of honour—the largeness and clearness of his nature—the smiling serenity, as of the fixed stars—the capacious calm that broods over the profound depths of his soul—the abiding strength of his character, which embodies the idea of power in complaisant plenitude—the infinite sweetness and peaceful self-possession—which are the express qualities of this man, whom Nature bare with so great a love, and endowed with so goodly a heritage. Such a reading would imply chaos where all was order, stark madness in the sanest of men, fearful folly in the wisest, worthlessness in the worthiest, unnaturalness in the most natural, and be altogether truer to Nat Lee at his maddest than to Shakspeare. It is the very opposite of him in every respect. And not only is

it opposed to all we believe, and all the testimony we may call on the subject, but the sonnets themselves will disprove it. As we have said, if such an affair as has been imagined had ever occurred, it would have been when their friendship was in its budding-time. It is imaged in sonnet 33 as taking place in the dawn, when the Earl would have been his friend but for 'one hour,' just when he had promised a 'beauteous day!' And, at least years afterwards, the Poet is able to say, when speaking in his own proper person, that—

> 'To *no other pass* my verses tend
> Than of *your graces and your gifts to tell.*'

How could this be so if he and the Earl had been actors in the dark drama conjectured, and the Poet had written for the purpose of exposure? And he can still greet his friend with this remarkable sonnet—

> 'Let not *my love be called Idolatry,*
> *Nor my beloved as an Idol show;*
> Since *all alike my songs and praises be*
> *To one, of one, still such, and ever so!*
> *Kind* is my love to-day, to-morrow kind,
> Still *constant* in a wondrous excellence;
> Therefore my verse, *to constancy confined,*
> *One thing expressing* leaves out difference:
> *Fair, kind* and *true,* is *all my argument,*
> Fair, kind and true, varying to other words;
> And *in this change is my invention spent,*
> Three themes in one which wondrous scope affords:
> Fair, kind and true, have often lived alone,
> Which three till now never *kept seat in one.*'

Now if the sad story as against Shakspeare had been true, this statement would be absolutely false in every particular. It would have been the grimmest mockery for him to have pleaded against his Beloved looking like an Idol if he had previously chronicled his fall into the

moral gutter where Shakspeare is supposed to have lain wallowing. His songs could not have been 'all alike' devoted to the praise of his unchangeable truth and wonderful constancy, if he had denounced his deception and raged in rhyme against his falsehood. It could not have been 'all alike' on either side if there had been so marked a change in word and deed. The Earl could not have been constant in his kindness if the reproaches had been aimed at him by the Poet; nor would the verse have been confined to expressing the constancy; nor could 'fair, kind, and true' be all his argument if he had passionately proclaimed the Earl as being foul, unkind, and false. The sonnet would contain a lie in each line, known to the Earl as such, and be an astounding specimen of stupendous effrontery. Again, if the dark story were true, what are we to make of sonnet 70? If the Earl had robbed the Poet of his Mistress and stung him to the quick, causing him to denounce his friend's treachery in a fury of ungovernable resentment, he could not have told the Earl, that he presented a 'pure unstained prime'—

> 'Thou hast passed by the ambush of young days,
> *Either not assailed, or Victor being charged,*'

when both of them would know so well that he had been assailed, and that he was a Victor in a far different sense. Which are we to believe, Shakspeare himself, or those who have interpreted his sonnets with such a wanton profanity? One of two things—Either the story was true, or it was not. If true, he could not directly after have extolled this false friend for his truth (sonnet 54), or given him the character which he has drawn in sonnet 70. But to step in for a closer grapple. We will once more suppose the story to be true. How then could Shakspeare be the first to attack when he had been the foremost to err? How should he blame his young friend

for permitting the '*base clouds*' and '*rotton smoke*' to hide his morning brightness, taunt him with sneaking to westward with '*this disgrace*,' hold him responsible for the 'base clouds,' overtaking himself and tell him that tears of repentance would be of no avail, that his *shame* could not '*give physic*' to Shakspeare's grief, for no one could speak well of such a 'salve' as that which might heal the wound but could never '*cure the disgrace?*' How could he thus throw such puerile and petulant exclamations at the Earl, his young friend, had he been the older sinner? But for his own connexion with the woman, the Earl would not have been brought within reach of her snares. It would be his own baseness that made the Earl's deception possible. It was he who had *let* the base clouds overtake both. The youth could only have loosely 'strayed' where the man of years had first deliberately gone. The Earl would see what a pretty comment it was on the 'husbandry in honour,' which the Poet had urged so eloquently, if he thus admitted that he was living in such dishonour. The falsehood of falsehoods was Shakspeare's own, his was the baseness, black beyond comparison, the disgrace that was past all cure.

After the death of Tybalt, Romeo, fearing the effect on Juliet, asks—

> 'Does she not think me an *old murderer*,
> Now I have stained the childhood of our joy?'

feeling that this blot of blood on the newly-turned leaf of his life, has soaked backwards through the whole book. So must the Poet have felt if the Earl had discovered any such black blot in his character; if he had found that all the professions of love, sole and eternal, whispered in private and proclaimed in public, were totally false; if he had proved his vaunted singleness in love to be a most repulsive specimen of double-dealing. With what conscience could the Poet turn round when caught by the

friend, who had only followed his footsteps, and upbraid him for the disgrace to himself, the treachery to their friendship? If he had not had a mistress he would not have lost a friend. Or how could he reproach his friend with breaking a 'twofold-truth?'—

> 'Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee;
> Thine, by thy beauty being false to me,'

whilst ignoring his own breach of the moral law and the marriage tie? The Earl would know what a double-dyed sinner he was; he would see through the moral blasphemy of his solemn twaddle. He would appreciate the value of his arguments for marriage, and his consecration of their friendship, when thus illustrated. He would see how apposite was the exclamation 'ah me, but yet thou mightst, my Sweet, *forbear*,' and chide him for the 'pretty wrongs' committed when he was '*sometime absent*' from the Earl's heart, IF *this absence was for a purpose so vile.* If the story had been true, then the position taken by the Poet would be utterly fatal, and the arguments foolishly false. It would be the hardened sinner obviously playing the part of the injured innocent; every charge he makes against his friend cuts double-edged against himself. How could he dare to speak of the Earl's 'sensual fault,' and talk of bringing in sense, to look on this weakness of his friend's nature in a sensible way, if he himself had been doing secret wrong to his own reputation, his dear friendship, his wife, his little ones? How could he thus patronise his frail friend who knew that the speaker was far frailer? How should he say, 'no more be grieved at that which thou hast done,' and try to make excuses for him, if he himself had done that which was infinitely worse? The Earl might weep, and the Poet might speak of the tears as rich enough to ransom all his ill-deeds; but they would not redeem the character of Shakspeare; the friend, with all his repent-

ance, could never have cured the married man's disgrace. He might affect to speak of the Earl's doings as 'pretty wrongs' that befitted his years, but his own sins could not be looked on as 'pretty;' these could not in any sense befit his own years.

How should Shakspeare ask—

> 'Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,
> And *make me travel forth without my cloak?*'

It is not possible for any man to ask such a question under the circumstances supposed. It would be too barefaced a bit of hypocrisy! His cloak! Why, he would have been travelling forth in the cloak of a most hideous and disgusting disguise. He would be a base lecher cloaking himself in a demure morality. Shakspeare, were he the speaker, could not have travelled forth without his cloak, it would have clung only too near to nature. Such a method of treating the whole matter would be a blunder worse than the crime. And to imagine for an instant that Shakspeare, the man who was all eye, could be blind to so patent a fact is as foolish as the story is false. It cannot be the Poet speaking, because *the speaker must be personally blameless to have any warrant or justification dramatically or morally for awarding the blame.* Shakspeare could not say of his love for his friend, that it was a love that might indeed be called *true.* It could not be *true* if so false and full of lies. Shakspeare could not say, and 'yet thou might'st my *seat*[1] forbear,' and *still assume to have his sole seat only in the heart of his friend,* and allude to the pretty wrongs committed when absent from his heart. Nor could he say 'If I lose thee my loss is my love's gain,' when he had sworn a hundred times that this friend was his only love. Further, the speaker is not a married man. If he had been, he could

[1] So read by the upholders of the Personal Theory.

not but have blamed himself when flinging reproaches so recklessly at his friend, or in the lull that followed, when he tried to find excuses for him. Had he been a married man, there would have been no need of charging himself with that one least fault in the world, an overmuch charity in construing; '*himself corrupting*' by his large liberality towards his friend. He need not have sought for so far-fetched a fault as that of straining a point in excusing his friend's sins more 'than they are,' because 'all men make faults,' and 'EVEN I in this,' that is in being so very charitable; the only fault of which the speaker is conscious! A married man could not charge the single one with his shame for what he had done being inadequate to give physic to his grief. Nor could he make that appeal to the public, 'for *no man* well of such a salve can speak,' if he were known to be a married man who had been found out in keeping a Mistress. It would not be the salve of which men would speak; but the moral sore! Lastly, the speaker is not a man at all. There is no mention of the speaker's sex—the allusion to 'him' in sonnet 34 being merely proverbial and perfectly general. This suppression cannot be without meaning; it makes greatly for my reading, and I shall show that the speaker is a woman addressing her lover and the woman-rival who has drawn her lover away from her side; a woman whose love is pure and who being free from personal blame has a right to reproach both the Earl and the lady who had professed to be the friend of both, and whom she suspects of having taken advantage of their friendship to ensnare the Earl and keep him in the strong toils of her wanton grace. The attitude, the arguments, the personal consciousness, are all wrong when applied to a guilty man; they are only possible to an innocent woman. Nowhere do we meet the blinking glance of conscious guilt; but at every turn of the subject the clear straight-forward look of honest love. The love and pos-

session are of that absolute kind which only the woman can claim. The 'loss in love' would touch her infinitely more nearly than it could a man. Such a connexion as is supposed need not, would not, take man from man in any such way as is here spoken of. If the woman were of such a character that both men could find her, there need be no loss whatever. And if Southampton had stolen Shakspeare's Mistress and afterwards repented, Shakspeare would not have had the loss ('*Tho' thou repent, yet I have still the loss,*' son. 34)—he might have had the woman again. In the personal interpretation of the first sonnet of this series we are positively asked to suppose Shakspeare to be of such a character as, in the midst of debauchery, to require his good saint and better angel the Earl of Southampton, or the Earl of Pembroke ('a more exquisite song than the other'), to keep him from hell—toward which in the absence of this guardian-spirit he inevitably tends. Yet he would maunder on the subject like one of his own characters, half-drunk, half-imbecile. For the speaker has no misgiving lest he may be going to hell on his own account, or because of his connexion with the bad angel—the worser spirit. Oh, no; the way, it seems, for this female Evil to draw him soon to hell is not by drawing him to her, but to tempt his friend to her side. One might have thought *that* would have been one way of saving Shakspeare, but not the way to win him soonest to hell. And if the woman would 'corrupt his saint to be a devil,' had she not corrupted him to be a devil? And if so, could they not all three continue in their devilhood comfortably corrupt? And where would have been the need of all this maudlin fuss? For, there is no hint that it would be the best course for Shakspeare to 'clear out' as quickly as possible; his sole concern is lest his friend should be taken in. Is it not a likely story?

Then the personal reading does not, cannot anywhere

touch the bottom and gauge the meaning of sonnets 133 and 134. 'Whoe'er keeps me, let my heart be his guard.' Against what, if a man were the speaker? And how could a man use the expression 'for I being pent in thee,' or 'thou wilt not, nor he will not be free,' when the least sense of humour would suggest that his friend had been all too free, if these complaints and charges had been made by a man. And, what would be the 'bond' alluded to, when sonnet 144, the darkest of all, shows the case to be one of suspicion only, a jealousy on account of the lady's character, not one of certainty, and the most passionate sonnet of the whole series expresses nothing more than a doubt after all? The most searching investigation yet made will prove that there is not the least foundation for the dark story as told against our Poet, save that which has been laid in the prurient imagination of those who have so wantonly sought to defile the memory of Shakspeare. And for the rest of our lives we may safely and unreservedly hold of him, what Anthony Bacon said of his brother Francis, that he was '*too wise to be abused; too honest to abuse.*'

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

ELIZABETH VERNON'S JEALOUSY OF HER LOVER, LORD SOUTHAMPTON, AND HER FRIEND, LADY RICH.

ELIZABETH VERNON'S SOLILOQUY.

Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still;
The better angel is a man right fair;
The worser spirit a woman coloured ill:
To win me soon to hell, my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side, [1]
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil;
Wooing his purity with her foul [2] pride:
And whether that my angel be turned fiend,
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;
But being both from me, both to each friend,[3]
I guess one angel in another's hell!
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
Till my bad angel fire my good one out.[4]

(144.)

[1] '*Tempteth my better Angel from my side.*'
So in Othello, 'Yea, curse his better Angel from his side.'

[2] 'With her foul pride.'
The copy of this sonnet in the 'Passionate Pilgrim' reads 'with her *fair* pride.'

[3] '*Both to each friend.*' Here is proof that the absent twain were friends before this affair.

[4] 'Till my bad Angel fire my good one out.'
We may perhaps get at the root idea of this line by aid of an expression of tragic intensity in 'King Lear'—'He that parts us shall bring a brand from Heaven and fire us hence like foxes.' In the present instance, I presume,

ELIZABETH VERNON TO THE EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON.

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:
Even so my Sun one early morn did shine
With all-triumphant splendour on my brow,
But out, alack! he was but one hour mine;
The region-cloud hath masked him from me now:
Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth;
Suns of the world may stain when Heaven's sun staineth. (33.)

Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day
And make me travel forth without my cloak,
To let base clouds o'ertake me on my way,
Hiding thy bravery in their rotton smoke?
'Tis not enough that thro' the cloud thou break
To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face,
For no man well of such a salve can speak
That heals the wound, and cures not the disgrace:
Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief;
Tho' thou repent, yet I have still the loss;
The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
To him[1] that bears the strong offence's cross:
Ah! but those tears are pearl which thy love sheds,
And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds. (34.)

the fox who is in hiding,—the Earl who is foxing it—will have to be fired out with a brand from the other place. The allusion—here humorously used—is to the burning out of the fox with fire-brands, at which Shakspeare must have assisted when he was a country lad.

[1] This 'him' has misled readers into thinking it characterised the speaker's sex, but it is merely and obviously a general allusion to a well-known proverbial truth. The speaker's sex is suppressed through the whole of these sonnets. We have only the feeling, which in poetry is the greatest fact of all, to guide us, and that indicates a woman, and proves the passion to be one of winnowed purity.

No more be grieved at that which thou hast done:
Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud;
Clouds and eclipses stain both Moon and Sun,
And loathsome cankers live in sweetest bud:
All men make faults, and even I in this,
Authorising thy trespass with compare,
Myself corrupting,[1] salving thy amiss;
Excusing thy sins more than thy sins are;
For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense,[2]
Thy adverse party is thy Advocate,—
And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence;
Such civil war is in my love and hate
That I an accessary needs must be[3]
To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me.

(35.)

Those pretty[4] wrongs that liberty commits
When I am sometime absent from thy heart,
Thy beauty and thy years full well befits,
For still temptation follows where thou art:
Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won,
Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assailéd;

[1] '*Myself corrupting.*' It has been supposed that the speaker of this sonnet, being a man, finds a precedent for the fault of his friend by *comparing it with his own.* A fair sample of the way in which these sonnets have been unfairly read! The sonnet contains nothing of the sort. The speaker says, 'All men make faults,' and on that account she has tried to excuse him; has excused him even more than his sins called for. *Her fault is that she has authorised his fault by making this comparison in his favour*; corrupted herself in excusing him and 'salving' his misbehaviour. '*Even I in this* am to blame, but such is my love I cannot help it.' Here is absolute proof that the speaker is not and cannot be that *corrupt* married man supposed. If he had been *so corrupt* it did not remain for him to *corrupt himself* by being so charitable when *salving* the misbehaviour of his young friend.

[2] 'To thy sensual fault I bring in sense.'

Something very like this in thought and expression is reversed in 'Measure for Measure': Angelo says of Isabel—

'She speaks such sense that my sense breeds with it.'

[3] 'Needs must be.' That is an allusion to the powerful *bond* of sonnet 134.

[4] '*Pretty*' in the sense of '*little.*'

'There is a saying old, but not so witty,
That when a thing is little it is pretty.'—*Taylor, the Water Poet.*

Also see the subject illustrated by 'Moth' for the edification of Don Armado.

And when a woman woos,[1] what woman's son
Will sourly leave her till she[2] have prevailéd?
Ay me! but yet thou might'st, my Sweet![3] forbear,
And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth,
Who lead thee in their riot even there
Where thou art forced to break a two-fold truth,—
Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee;
Thine, by thy beauty being false to me!

(41.)

That thou hast her, it is not all my grief;
And yet it may be said I loved her dearly;
That she hath thee is of my wailing chief,
A loss in love that touches me more nearly:
Loving offenders, thus I will excuse ye!
Thou dost love her, because thou know'st I love her;[4]
And for my sake even so doth she abuse me,
Suffering my friend for my sake to approve her:[5]

[1] 'When a woman woos.'

'For why should others' false adulterate eyes
Give salutation to my sportive blood?'
The Earl to Eliz. Vernon, Sonnet 121.

[2] 'Till she have prevailed.' The Quarto reads, 'Till *he* have prevailed.' An obvious misprint, corrected by Tyrwhitt.

[3] *My sweet, forbear.*' The Quarto reads, '*my seat, forbear,*' which has been made the most of by the advocates of the Personal Theory. Malone held that the context showed it to be a corruption; this my reading proves 'My Sweet' might fairly be accepted as the true text, if only on account of the 'sourly' of the preceding line,—these are two of the poet's favourite twin-terms, almost inseparable: e. g.

'That *sweet* thief which *sourly* robs from me.'—*Sonnet* 35.

'Were it not thy *sour* leisure gave *sweet* leave.'—*Sonnet* 39.

'To make a *sweet* lady sad is a *sour* offence.'
Troilus and Cressida, act iii. sc. 1.

'Speak *sweetly*, man, although thy looks be *sour*.'

[4] 'Thou dost love her because thou knowest I love her' is not an argument for a man to use. A man in such a case would not love the mistress *because* he knew that she was his friend's. The philosophy is altogether womanly and innocent, not impure and pimpish.

[5] 'To approve her.' To '*approve*' in Shakspeare's age signified to *make good*, to *establish*, and is so defined in 'Cawdrey's Alphabetical Table of Hard English Words' (1604). Thus the meaning here is, that the absent lady has

If I lose thee, my loss is my love's gain,
And losing her, my friend hath found that loss;
Both find each other, and I lose both twain,
And both, for my sake, lay on me this cross;
But here's the joy; my friend and I are one,
Sweet flattery! then she loves but me alone.

(42.)

ELIZABETH VERNON TO LADY RICH.

Beshrew that heart that makes my heart to groan
For that deep wound it gives my friend and me!
Is't not enough to torture me alone,
But slave to slavery my sweet'st friend must be?
Me from myself thy cruel eye hath taken,
And my next self thou, harder, hast engrossed;
Of him, myself, and thee, I am forsaken;
A torment thrice three-fold thus to be crossed!
Prison my heart in thy steel bosom's ward,
But then my friend's heart let my poor heart bail;
Whoe'er keeps me, let my heart be his guard;[1]
Thou canst not then use rigour in my jail:
And yet thou wilt; for I, being pent in thee,[2]
Perforce am thine, and all that is in me.

(133.)

So, now I have confessed that he is thine,
And I myself am mortgaged to thy will,
Myself I'll forfeit, so that other mine
Thou wilt restore, to be my comfort still:
But thou wilt not, nor he will not be free,
For thou art covetous and he is kind;
He learned but surety-like to write for me
Under that bond that him as fast doth bind:

permitted the speaker's Lover to make good, or establish, or test her affection for the speaker's self. The thought is quite honest and innocent. In no guilty sense could the trial be spoken of as imposed for the speaker's sake.

[1] So in the 'Arcadia,' book iii., Philoclea, a woman, prays on her lover's behalf—'Whatever becomes of me, preserve the virtuous Musidorus.'

[2] 'Being *pent* from liberty, as I am now.'—*Richard III.* act i. sc. 4.

The statute of thy beauty thou wilt take,
Thou usurer that putt'st forth all to use,
And sue a friend came debtor for my sake;
So him I lose thro' my unkind abuse!
Him have I lost; thou hast both him and me;
He pays the whole, and yet I am not free.

(134.)

Take all my loves, my Love, yea, take them all,
What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?
No Love! my love, that thou may'st true love call,
All mine was thine, before thou hadst this more:
Then if for my love thou my Love receivest,
I cannot blame thee for my love thou usest;
But, yet, be blamed, if thou thyself deceivest
By wilful taste of what thyself refusest:
I do forgive thy robbery, gentle thief,[1]
Altho' thou steal thee all my poverty!
And yet, love knows, it is a greater grief
To bear love's wrong, than hate's known injury:
Lascivious Grace, in whom all ill well shows,[2]
Kill me with spites! yet we must not be foes.

(40.)

Elizabeth Vernon's jealousy of her lover the Earl of Southampton and her friend and cousin Lady Rich, is told in these nine sonnets, which are now for the first time put together: they go to Autolycus's tune of '*Two Maids wooing a Man.*' The first sonnet contains a soliloquy on the subject, a form employed more than once in the dramatic sonnets. Then we have five sonnets addressed to the Earl, and three to the lady of whom Elizabeth Vernon

[1] 'Gentle thief'—

'You thief of love! what, have you come by night,
And stolen my love's heart from him?'

This is spoken *by* a woman *to* a woman in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream.'

[2] So in 'sonnet 150,' which is addressed to a woman,

'Whence hast thou this *becoming of things ill*?'

Also Cleopatra is called the

'Wrangling queen, *whom everything becomes*! the *vilest things become themselves in her.*'

is jealous. The first, as we have seen, has been held to tell a tale most dark and damning to our poet's moral character. But such an interpretation could only result from the shallowest possible reading. The sound of the sonnet has frightened readers from the sense. It is only tragic in terms. If the state of the case had been such as some readers have accepted, the story dark as they feared, it could scarcely have been so undecided. However positive they may have felt that Shakspeare had lost his mistress and made a fool of himself, the speaker in this sonnet is by no means so certain, but lives in doubt how the matter may stand. The imagery, the good and bad angel, is necessarily chosen on purpose to indicate the uncertainty, the undetermined fate. Thus the most desperate sonnet of the series is positively inconclusive of anything. Let us take it up for a much closer look at it.

It must be borne in mind that we are endeavouring to decipher a secret history of an unexampled kind. We can get little help except from the written words themselves. We must not be too confident of walking by our own light; we must rely more implicitly on that inner light of the sonnets, left like a lamp in a tomb of old, which will lead us with the greater certainty to the precise spot where we shall touch the secret spring and make clear the mystery. We must ponder any the least minutiæ of thought, feeling, or expression, and not pass over one mote of meaning because we do not easily see its significance. Some little thing that we cannot make fit with the old reading may be the key to the right interpretation.

Elizabeth Vernon, I maintain, is the speaker of these nine sonnets. She has two 'loves,' one that brings comfort, the other causes a feeling of despair. The words 'love' and 'friend' are terms mutually convertible both to a woman speaker as well as to a

man.[1] These 'loves' of hers are like two spirits which she personifies as a good angel and a bad angel, and these keep tempting or instigating her with their conflicting suggestions of good and evil. The one, Southampton, is a 'man right fair.' The 'worser spirit' is a woman 'coloured ill.' This is her cousin, Lady Rich. The 'coloured ill' applies to that public report of her reputation, which in her later years grew worse and worse, until with darkened fame she went down in a preternatural night. This 'female evil' is trying, as Elizabeth Vernon suspects, to tempt the Earl from her side. They are both absent from her, and they are both friends to each other, the intimacy being of the closest all round, for the suspected lady is still a personal friend of Elizabeth Vernon's —still one of her 'loves,' and still an angel, or the other could not be the *better* angel—and she fears the worst; uncertainty always fearing the worst. She fears that the lady will 'corrupt her saint to be a devil,' 'wooing his purity with her foul pride,' that is, with her pride in the power of her charms to do so foul a thing, and play so uncousinly a part. But—and here comes an allusion of the utmost importance, though seeming so casual, so carelessly made—this being the state of the case, her two friends so thick with each other, she cannot help fearing lest the present affair may turn out like one that has previously occurred. 'I guess one angel in *another's* hell!' Mark this. She does not guess one angel in *the* other's hell, which would be the Earl in Lady Rich's hell—whatever that might mean[2]—but *another's hell*, which implies

[1] The mother of Essex, in writing to her 'sweet Robin,' habitually speaks of Christopher Blount, her third husband, as 'my friend.' So the Psalmist —'My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my soul.'—*Psalm* xxxviii. v. 11. An original love-letter of Sir George Hayward, written in 1550, begins 'My dearest *Friend*.'—*Howard's Collection*, p. 521.

[2] 'Hell' is generally supposed to mean a place or state of punishment, and it is used by this speaker in lines 5 and 6 of the first sonnet to express great suffering.

another's sin and suffering. This other's 'hell,' I take it, is a thought of another lady, who was a friend of theirs, and who caused and suffered '*hell*' in a former transaction. Lady Rich is the 'angel' of this line, not the Earl. She is one of the *two* angels of the whole sonnet, as aforesaid. Here she becomes *the* angel for the sake of an allusion to *another* angel whom she seems likely to resemble in character. Elizabeth Vernon loves Lady Rich at first too much to believe her false; therefore, so far, she is one of her angels. And, even under the circumstances, black as they look, she only guesses *one* (this) angel may be in the 'hell' created by 'another angel,' one whom they both knew, had faith in, and were deceived in; one with whom the Earl had given cause for Elizabeth Vernon to speak of him in this way.

If this were so, if this angel were to prove false as another angel—satirically so called—had done, it would be a 'hell;'[1] hell to the speaker as well as to the fallen angel;

[1] 'Hell.' It has been suggested that Shakspeare's frequent and peculiar use of the word 'hell' in his earlier writings may have arisen from the fact that the lower part of the stage was called 'hell.' In the game of 'Barley-break,' also, a player may get into 'hell.' But the hell of lovers was a common theme with the Elizabethan poets. One of Spenser's missing poems bore that title. And in his 'Hymn in honour of Love," printed in 1596, although not all new, but *re-formed*, the same writer has thus painted the lover's hell:—

'The gnawing envy, the heart-fretting fear,
The vain surmises, the distrustful shows,
The false reports that flying tales do bear,
The doubts, the dangers, the delays, the woes,
The feined friends, the unassured foes,
With thousands more than any tongue may tell
Do make a lover's life a wretched hell.'

Shakspeare may have had this sonnet in mind when he wrote his. There is also something exceedingly suggestive of his sonnet in the idea and expression of one of Drayton's, the 20th:—

'An evil spirit, your beauty haunts me still,
Which ceaseth not to tempt me to each ill;
Thus am I still provoked to every evil
By this good-wicked spirit, sweet angel-devil.'

and she feels that this drawing away of her saint from her side is just the way to win her 'soon *to* hell'—the hell created by the false friend. But she is not sure, she only lives in doubt—

'Till my bad angel fire my good one out.'

And the Earl, her lover and 'good angel,' shall come back to her and smile away all uncertainty. She can only *guess* that the present drawing away of the Earl from her side may in effect be the same as occurred once before; she will not know until the bad angel shall start her lover home again, as we say, with a 'flea in his ear,' or as Garibaldi proposed serving the French Emperor. It will be seen that the coming back does not imply an occasional visit, but an absolute passing into another's possession, and the real state of matters is only to be fathomed by his coming back to her once for all or never coming back at all, not by his returning to say where he has been.

With regard to the other 'affair' and *another* angel which this sonnet alludes to, that is corroborated in the Earl's own confessions. Farther on, we shall find that he does admit having been the victim of a woman's 'syren tears,' the subject of a wretched delusion. He pleads guilty to that 'sensual fault' of his nature which he is charged with in these sonnets, but not in this instance. He emphatically denies that he was guilty in this sad case. He says the lady wronged him by her unkindness. He suffered in 'her crime.' And there is proof that she had done so in the fact of her being first to ask forgiveness and tender the '*humble* salve,' the healing balm offered in a penitent attitude, which was most suited to the heart she had so wounded. The *humble salve* shows that the lady, on finding herself mistaken, her suspicions wrongful, had eaten 'humble pie,' and eaten it with a good grace.

In the next sonnet the lady reproaches the Earl for

his having been led away from her side when it was yet the early dawn of their love. Her sun had but shone for 'one hour' with 'all triumphant splendour' on her brow, when the 'region-cloud' came over him, and hid him from her. Still, she will think the best in his eclipse. Her love shall not turn from him. Even though darkly hidden from her, she will have faith that he will shine again with all the early brightness. She will believe that the sun in heaven will be sullied by the clouds that pass over it soon as that her earthly sun can be stained by the clouds which mask him from her now. But the fear increases and the feeling deepens in the next sonnet, and we hear the tremulous voice of virgin love, the low cry of a shy loving nature, conscious that it has publicly let fall a veil of maidenly reserve. She pleads, 'why didst thou promise such a beauteous day, and MAKE me travel forth *without my cloak*?' Trustingly, confidingly, she has left her wonted place of shelter; she has ventured all on this new affection. The morning was so bright, the sun shone with such promise of a glorious day, she has come forth unfit to meet the storm which the gathering clouds portend. Her unprotected condition is pourtrayed most exquisitely with that natural touch and image, solely feminine, of her having travelled forth '*without her cloak*.' Why did her lover make her do this, and let 'base clouds' overtake her on her way? It will not be enough for him to break through that 'rotten smoke' of cloud to kiss the tears off her storm-beaten face, because others have seen how he has treated her. Her maiden fame has been injured, her maiden dignity wounded. No one can speak well of such a 'salve' as heals the personal wound and cures not the public disgrace; others are witnesses that she has been mocked. Though he may repent, yet she has lost that which he cannot restore. The offender may be sorry, yet, as every one knows, that lends but a weak relief to the victim who has to bear the 'cross' of a weighty

offence. There is an injury done which cannot so easily be undone. The sentiment is essentially womanly, purely maidenly. It shows a sense of honour that has the tremulous delicacy of a Perdita. Then comes the revulsion of feeling, the relief of thought; she pictures his repentance—

> 'Ah, but those tears are pearl which thy love sheds,
> And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds!'

Do not grieve any more, she continues in the next sonnet, and in a most loving spirit, she will make all the excuses she can for him. Sun and moon have their clouds and eclipses, the sweetest buds their cankers, the roses their thorns. All men have their faults, and even she will make a fault in this, that she is authorising his fault or transgression by comparison with the faults of others, corrupting herself, or herself sinning, in 'salving' over his misbehaviour, and in the largeness of her charity, excusing his sins even more than they are, magnifying them for more excuse. She will not only look on this fault of his nature sensibly, but will also try and take part against herself in favour of the 'sweet thief' who has robbed her of her lover's presence; such '*civil war is in her love and hate*' that she must needs be accessory to the theft. We shall soon see the meaning of the line italicised. The excuses are still carried on in the fourth of the sonnets spoken to the Earl. It is perfectly natural that he should have this tendency to commit these pretty wrongs when she is sometimes absent from his thoughts. It is a little 'out of sight, out of mind.' He is young and handsome, and pursued by temptation. He is beautiful, therefore sure to be assailed. He is kind and yielding, therefore he may be won, especially, as in the present instance, when a woman woos, and a woman like this cousin of hers, who has such power in bearing men off their feet, once she has fixed her fatal floating eyes upon them. In whose

every grace there 'lurks a still and dumb-discoursing devil that tempts most cunningly.'

> 'Ay me, but *yet thou might'st, my Sweet, forbear,*
> And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth,
> Who lead thee in their riot even there
> Where thou art forced to break a two-fold truth;
> Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee;
> Thine, by thy beauty being false to me.'

Then follows a bit of special pleading, partly very natural and partly sophistical. With all the playfulness, however, the earnestness is unmistakeable. Naturally enough she is sorry if she has lost her female friend, for she loved her dearly; but still more naturally she confesses that the loss in love which would touch her most nearly would be the loss of her lover. The rest of the sonnet is ingenious for love and charity's sake. Surely her lover only loves the lady because he knows she loves her, and the lady loves him just for the speaker's sake. Both have combined to lay this cross upon her; they are just trying her; but—

> 'Here's the joy, my friend and I are one,
> Sweet flattery! then she loves but me alone.'

This is the tone in which a woman laughs when her heart wants to cry. In the next three sonnets the address is direct from woman to woman, face to face, and the feeling is more passionate, the language of more vital import. Here are matters that have never been fathomed; expressions that have no meaning if a man were speaking to a man. These I interpret thus:—

Before the Earl of Southampton met with Mistress Vernon, and became enamoured of her, he was somewhat at variance with the Earl of Essex. In the declaration of the treason of the Earl, signed D., and quoted by Chalmers in his 'Suplimental Apology,' we are told that *emulations* (en-

vious rivalries) and *differences* at Court had risen betwixt Essex and Southampton, but the latter Earl's love for the cousin of Essex came to heal all, and it bound the two up in a bond, strong and long as life, which was only loosened by death. Also, at the time of Southampton's marriage, the Earl of Essex fell under her Majesty's displeasure for furthering, and, as we learn by Mr. Standen, for '*gendering*' the matter. So that from the hour when Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon became one in love, years before they were one in law, the Earl was committed in feeling, and, as we now see, in fact to the fortunes of the Earl of Essex.

He followed him through good and evil report. He held to him although he had to share the frowns of Her Majesty without sharing the smiles which fell on the favourite. The influence of Essex was often more fatal to friends than to foes, and in this respect the Earl of Southampton was far more justly entitled to the epithet 'unfortunate' than was Essex himself. He *was* most unfortunate in this friendship, for it seemed perfectly natural when Essex got in the wrong, for all eyes to turn and look at his friends to see *who* was the cause. Her Majesty often offered up a scapegoat from amongst his friends in this way. The worst of it being that these had to stand in the shadow even when he was visited with a burst of sunshine. In fact, his friends were always in the shadow which he cast. In these sonnets, Elizabeth Vernon feels that she is responsible for bringing Southampton under this 'bond' of friendship which binds him so fast through her. She is bound to the '*slavery*' of the Essex cause by family relationship, and through his love for her, Southampton has been brought under the influence of Lady Rich's fascinating eyes, through which there looks alternately an angel of darkness and an angel of light, according to her mood of mind; that fatal voice, made low and soft to imitate modesty and draw the fluttering heart into her snare, just as the fowler, with a low warble, tries to

lure the bird into his net; that wanton beauty, which can make all ill look lovely, and whose every gesture is a dumb-show that has but one interpretation for those who are caught by her amorous arts and luring lapwing-wiles, and also for those that watch and fear for them. Elizabeth Vernon feels that she is the innocent cause of bringing her dear friend the Earl into this double danger; the danger of too familiar an acquaintanceship with Lady Rich, and the danger of a too-familiar friendship with Essex, whose perturbed spirit and secret machinations are known to her. She blames herself for her 'unkind abuse' in having brought them together. 'Evil befal that heart,' she exclaims to her lady cousin, 'for the deep wound it gives to me and my friend. Is it not enough for you to torture me alone in this way, I who am full of timid fears, but you must also make my sweetest friend a slave to this slavery which I suffer, and was content to suffer whilst it only tormented me? You held me in your power by right of the strongest; your proud cruel eye could do with me almost as you pleased. I was your prisoner whom you kept in confinement close pent. You hold me by force, and I will not complain of that if I can only shield my lover from all danger; let my heart be his guard. I plead with you; but, alas! I know it is in vain; you *will* use rigour in our gaol, and torture your poor prisoners. I confess he is yours, and I myself am mortgaged to do your bidding. Now let me forfeit myself, and do you restore my lover to be my comfort. Ah, you will not, and he will not be free. You are covetous and he is kind. Poor fellow, he did but sign his name, surety-like, for me under *that bond* that binds him as fast as it binds me, and you will sue him, a friend, who has only come to you as a debtor for my sake, and take the statute of your beauty, the right of might, you 'usurer that put forth all to use;' that is, she who takes advantage of her loveliness to turn friends into lovers and lovers

into political adherents to the Essex cause; 'take all you can, in virtue of your beauty and our bond. Him have I lost; you have us both. He pays all, yet I am not, cannot be free.' The speaker acknowledges a power which compels her submission. Then she tries a little coaxing. 'Take all my loves, my Love,' what then? You have only what you had before. All mine was yours in one sense, but 'be blamed' if you deceive yourself and take it in another sense. If you would eat of the fruit of my love, come to it fairly by the right gate; do not climb over the wall, as a thief and a hireling, to steal. Still, for his sake I will forgive even robbery, although love knows it is far harder to bear this wrong done secretly in the name of love than it would be to suffer the injury of hatred that was openly known.' And now we have the summing up of the whole matter, the moral of the story. The speaker makes her submission almost abject, in obedience to a hidden cause, though the words are almost *spitten* out by the force of suppressed feeling—

> 'Lascivious Grace, in whom all ill well shows,
> *Kill me with spites*, yet *we must not be foes*.'

Admitting the speaker to be a woman, there must be more than a story of rivalry in love implied in those lines. Because if one woman be too friendly with another woman's lover, the sufferer would argue that the sooner she and the one who robbed her mind of its peace were foes the better for all parties. Rather than continue to suffer and bear until quite 'killed with spites,' she would say we *must* be foes, for I cannot, need not, will not bear any longer. All the more that it is the woman who pursues, an ordinary case would be simple enough. But there is a secret and sufficiently potent cause why these two should not become foes. The lady knows the fierce vindictive nature of her cousin; she fears lest the black eyes should grow baleful, and would almost rather

they should be turned on the Earl in wanton love than in bitter enmity. So deep is her dread of the one, so great her affection for the other. For his sake she resolves to bear all the 'spites' which her cousin's conduct can inflict upon her. For his sake, she and this cousin must not be foes. Such is the binding nature of their relationship, that the speaker feels compelled to be an accessory to the 'sweet thief' that 'sourly robs' from her. She will be the slave of her high imperious will, and bear the tyranny that tortures her, rather than quarrel. She will likewise be subtly politic with her love's profoundest cunning. And this is why there is such 'civil war' in her 'love and hate;' herein lies the covert meaning that has for so long dwelt darkly in these lines.

I think no one accustomed to judge of evidence in poetry can fail to see that the old story of a man speaker —a man who is married and keeps his mistress too—and that man Shakspeare, has been told for the last time, so soon as we have discovered a woman speaker, who is thus identified by inner character and outward circumstances. The breath of pure love that breathes fresh as one of those summer airs which are the messengers of morn, is enough to sweeten the imagination that has been tainted by the vulgar story, whilst the look of injured innocence and the absence of self-reproach, the chiding that melts into forgiveness and which was only intended to bring the truant back; the feeling of being left uncovered to the public gaze and cloakless to the threatening storm; the face in tears, the rain on the cheek, those 'women's weapons, water-drops;'[1] the natural womanliness of the expression, 'Whoe'er keeps me, let my heart be his guard,' the lines—

> 'Myself I'll forfeit so that other mine
> Thou wilt restore to be my comfort still!'

[1] 'Let not women's weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man's cheeks.'—*Lear*, act ii. sc. 4.

—the wrong done to love, which, though unknown, is worse than the known injury of open hatred; the motive, feeling, and excusing words—all are exquisitely feminine; whilst the imagery and symbols correspond in the thoroughest way to the womanly nature of it all.

The expression "*Lascivious Grace*, in *whom all ill well shows*, kill me with *spites*," as spoken from a woman to a rival, and applied, according to the story now for the first time told, is just one of those flashes of revelation by which we see nature caught in the fact! And by the same sudden illumination we catch sight of that Elizabethan Helen, the Lady Rich, seen and known in a moment, never to be forgotten.

There is a letter written by Lord Rich to the Earl of Essex, dated April 16th, 1597, which has been held to be so dark in meaning, so enigmatical in expression, that nothing has hitherto been made of its contents. Lady Rich had just got out of danger from the small-pox. In a letter dated three days later, Rowland White says, 'My Lady Rich is recovered of her small-pox, without any blemish to her beautiful face.' Lord Rich's letter refers to this illness of his wife, and the consequent danger to her fair face, but it also contained an enclosure touching certain love-matters therein written of, to the perplexity of his lordship, and relating to a 'fair Maid' in whom the Lady Rich was interested, of whose beauty she was so careful as not to send the writing direct for fear of infection:—'My Lord, your Sister, being loth to send you any of her infection, hath made me an instrument to send you this *enclosed epistle of Dutch true or false love*; wherein, if I be not in the right, I may be judged more infected than fitteth my profession, and to deserve worse than the pox of the smallest size. If it fall out so, I disburden myself, and am free from such treason, by my disclosing it to a Councillor, who, as your Lordship well knows, cannot be guilty of any such offence. Your Lord-

ship sees, by this care of a fair maid's beauty, she doth not altogether despair of recovery of her own again; which, if she did, assured by envy of others' fairness, would make her willingly to send infection among them. This banishment makes me that I cannot attend on you; and this wicked disease will cause your sister this next week to be at more charge to buy a masker's visor to meet you dancing in the fields than she would on [once?] hoped ever to have done. If you dare meet her, I beseech you preach patience unto her, which is my only theme of exhortation. Thus, over saucy to trouble your Lordship's weightier affairs, I take my leave, and ever remain your Lordship's poor brother to command, Ro. Rich.' Now, to my thinking, there is no more natural explanation of this mysterious letter than that the 'fair Maid' of whose beauty Lady Rich is so thoughtful a guardian, and to whom the 'epistle of Dutch true or *simulated* love' evidently belongs, is Elizabeth Vernon, cousin both to Lady Rich and to the Earl of Essex, and that we here catch a glimpse of this very group of sonnets, or a part of them, as they pass from hand to hand. The 'Epistle' over which Lord Rich tries to shake his wise head jocosely, is not sealed up from him. He has read it, and finds it only sealed in the sense; it is, as the unlearned say, all Greek to him, or, as he says, it is "Dutch." The subject, too, is amatory, so much he perceives; but whether it pertains to real life or to fiction is beyond his reach; he merely hopes the brother, who is a Councillor of State, will discover no treason in it. If this love-epistle, the purport of which his Lordship failed to fathom, should have consisted of the sonnets that Elizabeth Vernon speaks to Lady Rich in her jealousy, it would fit the circumstances of the case as nothing else could, and perfectly account for Lord Rich's perplexity. We may imagine how little he would make of them when their meaning has kept concealed from so many other prying eyes for two centuries and a

half. If my suggestion be right, this letter gives us a most interesting glimpse of the persons concerned, and of the light in which they viewed the sonnets; here contributing to the private amusement of Lady Rich, her brother Essex, and Elizabeth Vernon, whilst Lord Rich is not in the secret.

This jealousy of Mistress Vernon does not appear to have gone very deep or left any permanent impression. It certainly did not part the fair cousins, for their intimacy continued to be of the closest, at least up to the time of Essex's death, as is shown by Rowland White's letters; and we find that the Earl of Southampton was one of the chief mourners at the funeral of Mountjoy. Also it was to Lady Rich's house that Elizabeth Vernon retired in August, 1598, and there her babe was born, which she named Penelope, after her cousin, Lady Rich. There was only matter enough in it to supply one of the subjects for Shakspeare's poetry 'among his private friends.'

I have not been able to date these sonnets; they belong to the time at which the 'Midsummer Night's Dream' was written, but that is not fixed with certainty. The 'jealousy' may possibly have occurred before the 'journey,' but it suits best with my plan to print this group in connexion with the lovers' bickerings and flirtations that follow.

A PERSONAL SONNET.

SHAKSPEARE ON THE SLANDER.

THIS sonnet I read as the Poet's comment on the foregoing subject. It is written upon an occasion when the Earl has been suspected and slandered, and Shakspeare does not consider him to blame. We shall see that the Earl himself held that he was wronged by his lady in some particular passage of their love affairs, which I take to be her jealousy of Lady Rich. Shakspeare's treatment of the matter in this sonnet goes far to identify it with the story just told. Suspicion has been at work, and the Poet tells his friend that for one like him to be suspected and slandered is no marvel whatever. Suspicion is the ornament of beauty, and is sure to be found in its near neighbourhood: it is the crow that flies in the upper air. A handsome young fellow like the Earl is sure to be the object of suspicion and envy. The Earl has been suspected, and the suspicion has given rise to a slander. Therefore the Poet treats the charge of the jealousy sonnets as a slander. If it had been true, it would not have rested on suspicion. The lady herself was not sure if her suspicions were true—did not know if the absent ones were triumphing in their treachery—and Shakspeare in person implies that they were not. He speaks also to

the Earl's general character on the subject; says his young friend 'presents a pure unstained prime' of life; alludes to his having been assailed by a woman, and come off a 'victor being charged.' In the previous sonnets, as we saw, it was a woman who had wooed and tried to tempt the Earl from his mistress. But, pure and good as he may be, and blameless as his life has been, this is not enough to tie up envy. This sonnet, then, illustrates the story of Elizabeth Vernon's jealousy. It gives us the Poet's own view of the affair, together with his personal conclusions. Read on any theory, and looked at in any and every aspect, this must refute the scandalous interpretation of the preceding sonnets, which have been made to show that the Poet kept a mistress, and was robbed of her by his friend.

With the following sonnet we may take our leave of the *author* of so fallacious a discovery, so wanton a slander, and say, in the words of Count Gismond's innocent and avenged lady:—

> 'North, South,
> East, West, I looked. The *Lie* was dead
> And damned, and *Truth* stood up instead!'

SHAKSPEARE TO THE EARL.

That thou art blamed shall not be thy defect,
For slander's mark was ever yet the fair,[1]
The ornament of beauty is suspect,
A Crow that flies in Heaven's sweetest air!
So thou be good, slander doth but approve
Thy worth the greater, being wooed of Time;[2]
For canker Vice the sweetest buds doth love,
And thou present'st a pure unstainéd prime:

[1] In sonnet 112, it is the speaker who is this mark of slander.

[2] Steevens, in a note to this sonnet, says he has shown, on the authority of Ben Jonson, that 'of time' means of *the then present one*. Examples of this occur in these sonnets, but generally 'time' is the old personification; him of the scythe and hour-glass. It is so in sonnets 12, 15, 19, 65, 100, 116, 123, 124, 126, and there is every reason to believe that it is in the present instance.

Thou hast passed by the ambush of young days,
Either not assailed, or victor being charged;
Yet this thy praise cannot be so thy praise,
To tie up Envy evermore enlarged:
If some suspect of ill masked not thy show
Then thou alone kingdoms of hearts should'st owe.

(70.)

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

THE EARL TO ELIZABETH VERNON AFTER THE JEALOUSY.

In the first of these two sonnets there is evidence of a lovers' quarrel. Something has come between them and put them apart for awhile. There has been a period of suffering, a 'sad interim.' It is but reasonable to presume that the coolness was caused by the jealousy of the Earl's mistress; and that this is the lover's plea for a full and frank making up. The sonnet last quoted was a plea of Shakspeare's on his friend's behalf. In the present instance, the Earl pleads for himself; he seeks for a return to the old pleasant intimacy; he asks that the spirit of love may not be killed with a '*perpetual dulness.*' Let this '*sad interim*' be like the ocean that may roll its world of waters between two lovers, newly affianced, who stand watching on opposite shores for the return of love. Or call it the long dreary time of winter, which makes summer all the more wished for and all the more welcome. We shall see later on that the Earl, in sonnet 120, speaks of a 'night of woe' like this, occasioned by the unkindness of his mistress. I doubt not that the 'sad interim' and the 'night of woe' both meet in Elizabeth Vernon's jealousy, and that Shakspeare wrote of the one cause of trouble on both occasions. In the second of these two sonnets the Earl goes on to protest his love and care

for the lady. For her peace he is at such strife with his thoughts and feelings as may be found betwixt the miser and his wealth. One moment he is rich beyond everything as he looks at his treasure, and the next minute he is doubting whether a '*filching age*' may not steal it, whilst he is not near enough for her protection. The sonnet felicitously expresses the alternations of the lover's feelings, the sudden change from glow to gloom, the tender trouble that continually ripples over the smiling surface of his inner life:—

Sweet love,[1] renew thy force; be it not said,
Thy edge should blunter be than appetite,
Which but to-day by feeding is allayed,
To-morrow sharpen'd in his former might:
So, love, be thou; although to-day thou fill
Thy hungry eyes e'en till they wink with fulness,
To-morrow see again, and do not kill
The spirit of love with a perpetual dulness:
Let this sad *interim*,[2] like the ocean be
Which parts the shore, where two contracted new
Come daily to the banks, that, when they see
Return of love, more bless'd may be the view:
Or call it winter, which, being full of care,
Makes summer's welcome thrice more wished, more rare.

(56.)

So are you to my thoughts as food to life,
Or as sweet-seasoned showers are to the ground;
And for the peace of you I hold such strife
As 'twixt a miser and his wealth is found:
Now proud as an enjoyer and anon
Doubting the filching age will steal his treasure;[3]
Now counting best to be with you alone,
Then bettered that the world may see my pleasure:

[1] The 'love' here addressed is not a person, but a passion; and it is distinctly enough stated to be the love that precedes marriage.

[2] This 'sad interim' is marked in the original copy by italics.

[3] 'Doubting the *filching age* will *steal* his *treasure*.' The age of Elizabeth

Sometime all full with feasting on your sight,
And by and by clean-starvéd for a look;
Possessing or pursuing no delight
Save what is had or must be from you took:
Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day,
Or gluttoning on all, or all away.

(75.)

was not a man-stealing age, so far as history records. Of necessity it must be a woman here spoken of, and the jealous lover is fearful lest the 'filching age' should rob him of his mistress by that seduction which is only too common.

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

ELIZABETH VERNON REPAYS THE EARL BY A FLIRTATION OF HER OWN: HIS REPROACH.

In these sonnets the Earl still pleads, but his mistress is determined to vex him with her wilful humours and signs of inconstancy. They continue the love-quarrel which, as I suppose, followed the Earl's flirtation with Lady Rich. The lady is bent on punishing her lover, apparently, by a flirtation of her own. The speaker stands on the knowledge of his own desert, in spite of appearances that gave rise to scandal. He says that if his lady shall frown on the defects and faults of his character, if her love shall have been tried to the uttermost—'cast its utmost sum'—and is called to a reckoning by wiser reflections and warier considerations to find nothing further in his favour, and she shall strangely pass him by, and hardly give him greeting, and love shall be converted from the thing it once was, for reasons sufficiently grave — against that time he will fortify himself with the knowledge that he does not deserve such treatment. He admits her right to leave him, for he can allege no cause why she should love him. And if she be really disposed to make light of his love, and scorn his merit, he will fight on her side against himself, for he is best acquainted with his own weaknesses and the injuries which he does to himself. Such is his

love, and so much does he belong to her, that for her right he will bear all wrong. Some glory in their birth, others in their skill, their wealth, their rich raiment. But all such particulars of possession he betters in 'one general best.' Her love is better than high birth, wealth, or treasures. Having her, he has the sum total of all that men are proud of. He is only wretched in the thought that she may take all this away if she takes away herself from him. But she may do her worst to steal herself away from him: she is his for life. His life is bound up with her love, and both will end together. Therefore he need not trouble himself about other wrongs when, if he loses her love, there is an end of all. On this fact he will plant himself firmly, and not let her wilful humours and signs of inconstancy vex him further. He is happy to have her love, and will be happy to die should he lose her. That is the position he takes. Still, his philosophy does not supply him with armour of proof. The darts of a lover's jealousy will pierce. He cannot rest in his conclusions, however final. With a lover it is not only Heaven or Hell; there is the intermediate Purgatorial state. After the magnanimity of feeling will intrude this mean thought!—

> 'But what's so blessed fair that fears no blot?
> Thou may'st be false, and yet I know it not.'

If she were false to him he could not know it, he should live on like a deceived husband; her looks might be with him, her heart elsewhere. For Nature has so moulded her, and given her such sweetness and grace that, whether loving him or not, she must always look lovely, and her looks would not show her thoughts, or set the secret of her heart at gaze, even if both were false to him. Pray God it be not so, his feeling cries! 'How like is thy beauty to that Apple of Eve, smiling so ripely on the outside, and so rotten within, if thy sweet virtue correspond

not to the promise of that fair face!' His thoughts have the yellow tinge of a lover's jealousy. Apparently, he is not yet 'paid out' according to the lady's thinking. In the last of these sonnets she has not ceased to punish him. And, just as apparently, her artifice is so far successful. The lover grows more earnest, more anxious than ever. She has flirted enough to set the gossips gadding on the subject. The story has been told to him with ample additions and coarse comments. He concludes his reproach to her with a heart-felt warning:—

Against that time—if ever that time come—
When I shall see thee frown on my defects,
When as thy love hath cast its utmost sum,
Called to that audit by advised respects;[1]
Against that time when thou shalt strangely pass,
And scarcely greet me with that sun, thine eye,
When love, converted from the thing it was,
Shall reasons find of settled gravity—
Against that time do I esconce me here
Within the knowledge of mine own desert,
And this my hand against myself uprear,
To guard the lawful reasons on thy part:
To leave poor me thou hast the strength of laws,
Since why to love I can allege no cause.

(49.)

When thou shalt feel disposed to set me light,
And place my merit in the eye of scorn,
Upon thy side against myself I'll fight
And prove thee virtuous, tho' thou art forsworn:[2]

[1] 'Advised respects;' 'advised respect' occurs in 'King John,' act iv. sc. 2.

[2] 'And prove thee virtuous tho' thou art *forsworn*.'

Having broken her oath or troth-plight to be true to him. Thus in 'Venus and Adonis':—

'So do thy lips
Make modest Dian cloudy and forlorn,
Lest she should steal a kiss, and die *forsworn*.'

Having broken her oath of virginity. With Shakspeare, *forswearing* is *oath-breaking*. But what oath could Southampton have taken to be true to

With mine own weakness being best acquainted,
Upon thy part I can set down a story
Of faults concealed wherein I am attainted,[1]
That thou in losing me shalt win much glory:
And I by this will be a gainer too:
For binding all my loving thoughts on thee,
The injuries that to myself I do,[2]
Doing thee vantage, double-vantage me—
Such is my love, to thee I so belong
That for thy right myself will bear all wrong.
(88.)

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,
Some in their wealth, some in their body's force,
Some in their garments, tho' new-fangled ill,
Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse:
And every Humour hath his adjunct pleasure
Wherein it finds a joy above the rest,
But these particulars are not my measure,
All these I better in one general best:
Thy love is better than high birth to me,[3]
Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' cost;
Of more delight than hawks or horses be;
And having thee, of all men's pride I boast;
Wretched in this alone, that thou may'st take
All this away, and me most wretched make.
(91.)

him? The antithesis of the line is only possible when spoken to a woman. In a previous sonnet we have two lovers *newly affianced*, which I take to be a literal fact, not a mere image.

[1] 'I can set down a story,' &c. So Hamlet says, 'I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me.'

[2] 'The injuries that to myself I do.'

So in 'King Lear':—

'O, Sir, to wilful men,
The injuries that they themselves procure
Must be their schoolmasters.'

[3] Had Shakspeare been speaking, he would not have looked down upon high birth whilst addressing a peer of the realm. The speaker is of high birth, and possesses the 'particulars' enumerated; but they do not fill the measure of his joy; all these he betters in the best of all, his lady's love.

But do thy worst to steal thyself away,
For term of life thou art assuréd mine;
And life no longer than thy love will stay,
For it depends upon that love of thine!
Then need I not to fear the worst of wrongs,
When in the least of them my life hath end;
I see a better state to me belongs
Than that which on thy humour doth depend:
Thou canst not vex me with inconstant mind,
Since that my life on thy revolt doth lie;
O, what a happy title do I find,
Happy to have thy love, happy to die!
But what's so blessed fair that fears no blot?—
Thou may'st be false, and yet I know it not!

(92)

So shall I live, supposing thou art true,
Like a deceivéd husband: so love's face
May still seem love to me, though altered new;
Thy looks with me, thy heart in other place:
For there can live no hatred in thine eye,
Therefore in that I cannot know thy change:
In many's looks the false heart's history
Is writ in moods and frowns and wrinkles strange,
But Heaven in thy creation did decree
That in thy face sweet love should ever dwell;
Whate'er thy thoughts or thy heart's workings be,
Thy looks should nothing thence but sweetness tell:
How like Eve's Apple doth thy beauty grow,
If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show![1]

(93.)

[1] So in the 'Merchant of Venice,' act i. sc. 3:—

'A goodly apple rotten at the heart:
O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath.'

In a note on this sonnet, Malone writes, 'Mr. Oldys observes, in one of his manuscripts, that this and the preceding sonnet seem to have been addressed by Shakspeare to his beautiful wife on some suspicion of her infidelity!' Poor Mrs. Shakspeare! The Personal Theory has not even spared her!

How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame
Which, like a canker in the fragrant Rose,
Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name!
O, in what sweets dost thou thy sins enclose!
That tongue that tells the story of thy days,
Making lascivious comments on thy sport,
Cannot dispraise but in a kind of praise:
Naming thy name blesses an ill report:
O, what a mansion have those vices got,
Which for their habitation chose out thee!
Where Beauty's veil doth cover every blot,
And all things turn to fair that eyes can see!
Take heed, dear heart, of this large privilege;
The hardest knife ill-used doth lose his edge.

(95.)

PERSONAL SONNETS.

SHAKSPEARE IS SAD FOR THE EARL'S '*HARMFUL DEEDS.*'

ALTHOUGH Shakspeare had, in a sonnet already quoted, replied to a slander on the Earl, made the best of some cause of quarrel betwixt the lover and his mistress, and spoken handsomely of his young friend's character in general, yet there came a time when the opposition to the marriage, the bickerings with Elizabeth Vernon, and the kindling temperament of the headstrong youth led to his living a somewhat loose life for a while. This we shall find most penitently confessed in some later sonnets when he comes to sue for pardon. In the present group of Personal Sonnets, Shakspeare mourns for the wild courses of his friend. He would rather die than see it with his eyes, only his heart is so much with the Earl that he could not leave him in such a world alone. The first sonnet is somewhat general, but the others will point the meaning and expound the feeling. He is sad for many things that he sees, but most of all on account of his friend. Ah! why should he live with persons who are morally infectious, he asks, and with his presence grace the society of the impious? Why dwell with sinners, and give them the advantage of his company by allowing them to decorate their foulness with his fairness? Why should he, as it were, give colour to their faded complexion, freshness to their pallor, and himself lose more in reality than he

can impart to others in appearance? Every one is willing to give his outward beauty its meed of praise, but they are quick to judge of his mental gifts by these wild doings of his, and though their eyes look kindly on him, yet they smell the rankness of the weed, whilst seeing the fairness of the flower. The odour does not match the show, because he has grown common; the flower has been vulgarly handled. In the next sonnet, the Earl is reminded that the rotting lily smells far worse than the withering weed; the higher the organisation the deeper the degradation. And if the beautiful flower meet with *infection*, the basest weed is at once a worthier thing. The sonnet implies that the Earl is not one of those who rightly inherit the graces of Heaven, husband Nature's gifts, and are careful stewards of their ten talents, being slow to temptation, and 'lords and owners of their faces;' on the contrary, he is a prodigal spendthrift, and will do great harm to himself because he has great power. Then, as it seems to me, the Poet suggests that his friend should try his hand at writing. Why not exercise his mind in that way? It would profit him and much enrich his book:—

'And of this book *this* learning may'st thou taste.'

That is, he will find in it many reflections and moralisings on the subject of youth's transiency and Time's fleetness.

Readers who are troubled with any lingering misgivings that the Poet had lived a loose life in the companionship of his patron and friend should pause over these sonnets until the mental mist passes away. The fifth, which sets before the young lavish nature such a sensible sober ideal of the wisely-ordered life and disciplined manhood, is a remarkable study. It has been called 'the life without passion,' and supposed to contain an ironical comment on those whose blood is 'very snow-broth' for coldness! But it is the simple earnest of a serious man, who offers the faithful admonition of an elder friend. A genuine man,

sagacious and sincere, and he who wrote these lines must have been known by the person addressed to have kept his own life sweet, his affections high and pure, for his words to have had either weight or warrant of authority.

As one of the lines had appeared in a play in the year 1596, the sonnet to which it belongs, together with the rest of the group, would not be written later, I think, than 1595, or early in the year following; but it is of course impossible to date every one of the sonnets:—

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry, —
As, to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
And strength by limping sway disabled,
And Art made tongue-tied by Authority,
And Folly, doctor-like, controlling Skill,
And simple truth, miscalled simplicity,
And captive Good attending captain Ill:
Tired with all these, from these I would be gone,
Save that to die, I leave my Love alone!

(66.)

Ah! wherefore with infection should he live,[1]
And with his presence grace impiety,
That Sin by him advantage should achieve,
And lace itself with his society?
Why should false painting imitate his cheek,
And steal dead seeming of his living hue?
Why should poor beauty indirectly seek
Roses of shadow, since his rose is true?
Why should he live, now Nature bankrupt is,
Beggared of blood to blush thro' lively veins?

[1] 'Ah, wherefore with *infection* should he live?'
In sonnet 111, it is the speaker who offers to drink 'potions of Eysell' because of his '*strong infection*.'

For she hath no exchequer now but his,
And, proud of many, lives upon his gains:
O! him she stores, to show what wealth she had
In days long since, before these last so bad.

(67.)

Thus is his cheek the map of days out-worn,
When Beauty lived and died as flowers do now,
Before these bastard signs of fair were borne,
Or durst inhabit on a living brow;
Before the golden tresses of the dead,
The right of sepulchres, were shorn away
To live a second life on second head,
E'er Beauty's dead fleece made another gay:
In him those holy antique hours are seen,
Without all ornament, itself[1] and true,
Making no summer of another's green,
Robbing no old to dress his beauty new;
And him as for a map doth Nature store,
To show false Art what beauty was of yore!

(68.)

[1] 'Without all ornament itself and true.' Surely we ought to read '*himself* and true,' says Malone. Surely not: If the eye be lifted one half inch beyond the nose, it will perceive that the 'Beauty' of the 2nd and 8th lines governs the *itself* of the 10th. The Poet means Beauty, '*simple, of itself*,' as was Falstaff's sack!

N.B.—A like case occurs in the 'Tempest,' and, if I do not greatly err, a similar look backward will tend to simplify a perplexing passage:—

'My sweet mistress
Weeps when she sees me *work*, and says such baseness
Had ne'er like executor! I forget—
But these sweet thoughts do even refresh my labours—
Most busiless when I do IT.'

Here the labours are referred to parenthetically: the previous '*work*' is the 'it' of the last line. Ferdinand says, for his part he forgets, not only the baseness of his work, but the work altogether; is only reminded of it by these sweet thoughts that *will* come and perforce refresh his labours. He is least occupied with the work, least engaged in it as a matter of business, most unbusied by it, or most *busiless* whilst doing it, because his thoughts are with her who thus turns his consciousness into comforting. The subtle, dreamy lover-like beauty of his 'I forget'—he only thinking parenthetically, and by reflex from his mistress even of how the labour is lost in the love!—is one of the poet's rarest effects. So rare and fine is it that the meaning—like the smitten harp-string—is almost rapt from sight to pass away in sound.

Those parts of thee that the world's eye doth view
Want nothing that the thought of hearts can mend:
All tongues—the voice of souls—give thee that due,
Uttering bare truth, even so as foes commend:
Thine outward thus with outward praise is crown'd;
But those same tongues that give thee so thine own,
In other accents do this praise confound,
By seeing farther than the eye hath shown:
They look into the beauty of thy mind,
And that in guess they measure by thy deeds;[1]
Then (churls) their thoughts, altho' their eyes were kind,
To thy fair flower add the rank smell of weeds!
But why thy odour matcheth not thy show,
The solve is this—that thou dost common grow.[2]

(69.)

They that have power to hurt and will do none,
That do not do the thing they most do show,
Who moving others are themselves as stone,
Unmovéd, cold, and to temptation slow;
They rightly do inherit Heaven's graces
And husband Nature's riches from expense;
They are the lords and owners of their faces,
Others but stewards of their excellence:
The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself it only live and die;
But if that flower with base infection meet,
The basest weed outbraves his dignity!
For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

(94.)

Thy Glass will show thee how thy beauties wear,
Thy Dial how the precious minutes waste;
The vacant leaves thy mind's imprint will bear,
And of this Book this learning may'st thou taste!

[1] '*Thy deeds.*' In Sonnet 111, it is the speaker who bewails his 'harmful *deeds.*'

[2] '*Thou dost common grow.*' In Sonnet 112, the speaker has been the mark of common scandal.

The wrinkles which thy Glass will truly show
Of mouthéd graves will give thee memory;
Thou by thy Dial's shady stealth may'st know
Time's thievish progress to eternity:
Look, what thy memory cannot contain
Commit to these waste blanks, and thou shalt find
Those children nursed—delivered from thy brain—
To take a new acquaintance of thy mind:
These offices, so oft as thou wilt look,
Shall profit thee, and much enrich thy Book.

(77.)

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

1597—8.

A FAREWELL OF THE EARL'S TO ELIZABETH VERNON.

It has now come to a parting in downright earnest with Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon. The lover speaks as one who has an 'honourable grief lodged here, that burns worse than tears can drown.' She is too dear for him to possess. He has called her his for awhile, because she gave herself to him, either not knowing her worth or his unworthiness. She gave herself away upon a mistake, a misconception, his patent having been granted in error; and her better judgment recalls the gift. Farewell! Whatsoever reason she may assign for this course, he will support it, and make no defence on his own behalf. She cannot disgrace him half so badly, whatever excuse she may put forth for this 'desired change,' as he will disgrace himself. Knowing her will, he will not claim her acquaintance, but walk no more in the old accustomed meeting-places; and should they meet by chance, he will look strange, see her as though he saw her not. He will not name her name lest he—'too much profane'—should soil it, and very possibly tell of their acquaintanceship. He will fight against himself in every way for her; he must never love him whom she hates. 'Then hate me

when thou wilt; let the worst come, if ever, now, whilst the world is bent upon crossing my deeds. Join with the spite of Fortune, make me bow all at once. Do not wait till I have surmounted my present sorrow. Give not a night of sighs, a morrow of weeping, to lengthen out that which you purpose doing. Do not come with the greater trial when other petty griefs have wreaked their worst upon me, but in the onset come and let me taste the worst of Fortune's might at one blow. Then—

> 'Other strains of woe, which now seem woe,
> Compared with loss of thee will not seem so.'

This parting I conjecture to have occurred, or been thus spoken of, after the disgraceful affair in Court, which is chronicled by Rowland White. On the 19th of January, 1598—to repeat the old gossip's words—he writes to Sir Robert Sidney: 'I *hard of some unkindness* should be between 3000 (the No. in his cypher for Southampton) *and his Mistress, occasioned by some report of Mr. Ambrose Willoughby.* 3000 called hym to an account for yt, but the matter was made knowen to my Lord of Essex, and my Lord Chamberlain, who had them in Examinacion; what the cause is I could not learne, for yt was but new; but *I see* 3000 *full of discontentments.*' Two days later he records that Southampton was playing a game of cards called Primero with Raleigh and some other courtiers in the presence-chamber. They continued their game after the Queen had retired to rest. Ambrose Willoughby, the officer in waiting, warned them that it was time to depart. Raleigh obeyed; but when Willoughby threatened to call in the guard and pull down the board, Southampton took offence and would not go. Words ensued, and a scuffle followed; blows were exchanged, and Willoughby tore out some of Southampton's hair. When the Queen heard of the affair next morning, she thanked Willoughby for his part in it, and said, probably with a fierce glance at one

of Southampton's friends, 'he should have sent the Earl to the porter's lodge to see *who durst have fetched him out.*' The Queen ordered Southampton to absent himself from the Court. He was again in disgrace, with Mistress Vernon as a grieved looker-on. Other circumstances tend to corroborate my view, that this was the occasion on which the following sonnets were written. The mental condition of Elizabeth Vernon, as described in White's letters, affords good evidence. The Earl proposed leaving England for Paris, to offer his sword to Henry IV. of France. And 'his fair Mistress doth wash her fairest face with too many tears.' Also the allusions in the third sonnet identify the time as being after the Earl's return from the 'Island Voyage' in October 1597, when he received frowns instead of thanks for what he had done, and found the world bent upon crossing his deeds; the 'spite of Fortune' more bitter than ever, because he had dared to pursue and sink one of the enemy's vessels without Monson's orders:—

Farewell! thou art too dear for my possessing,
And like enough thou know'st thy estimate;
The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing;
My bonds in thee are all determinate:
For how do I hold thee, but by thy granting?
And for that riches where is my deserving?
The cause of this fair gift to me is wanting,
And so my patent back again is swerving:
Thyself thou gav'st, thy own worth then not knowing,
Or me, to whom thou gav'st it, else mistaking;
So thy great gift, upon misprision growing,
Comes home again, on better judgment making:
Thus have I had thee, as a dream doth flatter;
In sleep a king, but waking, no such matter.

(87.)

Say that thou did'st forsake me for some fault,
And I will comment upon that offence:
Speak of my lameness and I straight will halt,
Against thy reasons making no defence:

Thou canst not, Love, disgrace me half so ill,
To set a form upon desired change,[1]
As I'll myself disgrace; knowing thy will,
I will acquaintance strangle and look strange;
Be absent from thy walks, and in my tongue,
Thy sweet belovéd name no more shall dwell,
Lest I, too much profane, should do it wrong
And haply of our old acquaintance tell:
For thee against myself I'll vow debate,
For I must ne'er love him whom thou dost hate.
(89.)

Then hate me when thou wilt; if ever, now;
Now, while the world is bent my deeds to cross,
Join with the spite of Fortune, make me bow,
And do not drop in for an after-loss:
Ah! do not, when my heart hath 'scaped this sorrow,
Come in the rearward of a conquered woe:
Give not a windy night a rainy morrow,
To linger out a purposed overthrow!
If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last
When other petty griefs have done their spite,
But in the onset come; so shall I taste
At first the very worst of Fortune's might;
And other strains of woe which now seem woe,
Compared with loss of thee will not seem so.
(90.)

[1] 'To set a form upon desired change.' So in 'King John':—
'To set a form upon that indigest
Which he hath left so shapeless and so rude.'

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

1598.

THE EARL TO ELIZABETH VERNON AFTER HIS ABSENCE.

THE last group has in it the pain of parting; the present, the rapture of return. Both are essentially amatory, and this is full of the flowery tenderness of the grand passion. How could any one think that the greatest of all dramatists would have lavished such imagery on the feeling of man for man, devoted this dalliance with all the choice beauties of external nature as the beloved's shadow and looked upon the frailest flowers as the 'figures of delight,' drawn after the pattern of a man? As though our Poet did not know the difference betwixt courting a man and wooing a woman! As though he would have charged the Violet, his own darling, with stealing its sweetness from a man's breath, and its purple pride from the blood of a man's veins! Why, he had, in sonnet 21 (p. 132) protested most strenuously against any such interpretation. He says it is not with him as with those who make a

> 'couplement of proud compare,
> With April's first-born flowers and all things rare,'

when writing to his friend in person. It is Shakspearian sacrilege to suppose that the Poet ever condemned the lily for daring to emulate the whiteness of a warrior's

hand. It is an insult offered to the '*white* wonder of dear Juliet's hand,' that Romeo adored; the '*snow-white* hand of the most beauteous Lady Rosaline,' that my Lord Biron addressed; the 'princess of *pure white*' saluted by Demetrius; the '*white* hand of Rosalind,' by which Orlando swore; the '*white* hand of a lady' that Thyreus was soundly whipped for kissing; the *white* hand of Perdita that Florizel took, 'as soft as dove's down and as *white* as it,' and Cressid's hand, 'in whose comparison all *whites* are ink.' This was a grace most jealously preserved for the dainty hands of his women, not thrown away on his fighting men!

The present return of the Earl I conjecture to be from the journey which followed the parting in the last group. The speaker says how like a winter has his absence been, and yet it was the time of flowers and of fruit, summer and autumn all the while. Southampton left England late in February of the year, and came home for good in November. He paid a hasty secret visit in August to marry Elizabeth Vernon, but the absence altogether corresponds to the one herein described. The third sonnet contains fifteen lines. A variation which suggests that some of the sonnets ran on as stanzas in a poem, and that in the present instance this continuity was marked by an extra line.

How like a winter hath my absence been
From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!
What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen,
What old December's bareness everywhere!
And yet this time removed [1] was summer's time;
The teeming autumn big with rich increase,
Bearing the wanton burthen of the prime,
Like widowed wombs after their lords' decease:

[1] 'This time removed,' *i.e.*, the time while I was remote from you. So in sonnet 116, Shakspeare calls the Earl the 'Remover' who has wandered far away from his Mistress.

Yet this abundant issue seemed to me
But hope of orphans and unfathered fruit:
For summer and his pleasures wait on thee,
And, thou away, the very birds are mute—
Or, if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer
That leaves look pale, dreading the winter's near.
(97.)

From you I have been absent in the spring,
When proud pied April, dressed in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything,
That heavy Saturn laught and leapt with him:
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew:
Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
They were but sweet, but figures of delight,
Drawn after you, you pattern of all those!
Yet seemed it winter still, and, you away,
As with your shadow I with these did play.
(98.)

The forward Violet thus did I chide:—
'*Sweet thief! whence didst thou steal thy sweet that smells*
If not from my Love's breath? the purple pride
Which on thy soft cheek for complexion dwells,
In my Love's veins thou hast too grossly dyed!'
The lily I condemnéd for thy hand,
And buds of marjoram had stolen thy hair;[1]
The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,
One blushing shame, another white despair;

[1] The likeness indicated by this comparison must be one of shape, not of colour. The poet does not say the flower of the marjoram, which is purple and white. Readers may seek in vain for any resemblance of the hair to marjoram, shape or colour, in the portraits of Southampton and Herbert.

A third, nor red nor white, had stolen of both
And to his robbery had annexed thy breath;
But, for his theft, in pride of all his growth,
A vengeful canker ate him up to death!
More flowers I noted, yet I none could see,
But sweet or colour it had stolen from thee.

(99.)

PERSONAL SONNETS.

1598—9.

—♦—

SHAKSPEARE TO THE EARL AFTER SOME TIME OF SILENCE.

In the hundredth sonnet, which, in Thorpe's collection, follows the group on absence, there is curious proof of an absence of the person addressed, and a silence on the part of the speaker. Yet, the person who has been away cannot have been Shakspeare, or *the absence would be the cause of the silence!* The speaker in the previous sonnets says nothing could make him 'any summer's story tell,' whereas the speaker in this sonnet has been telling stories; has been at work on some worthless old story or other, turning it into a play, during the absence of the previous speaker. Hard work, in his friend's absence, is the cause why he has forgotten so long to write of the Earl, and not his own absence from England. The length of the absence also is opposed to the idea of it being Shakspeare who was away from his theatre all through the spring, summer and autumn! These sonnets show plainly that the Earl, who was the speaker in the preceding three sonnets, has now returned from abroad, and the Poet stirs up his muse on the subject of the Earl's sonnets. Return, forgetful muse, he says, and redeem the time that has been spent *so idly*

in darkening thy power to lend base subjects light. Sing to the ear that *does esteem thy lays*, and gives thy pen both skill and argument. Rise and see if, during his absence, Time has engraven any wrinkle in his face. If so be thou the satirist of Time's power, and make his spoils despised, by retouching with tints of immortal youth this portrait that shall be hung up beyond the reach of decay. It will be seen that Shakspeare speaks of his friend with a lighter heart, and once more exalts his virtues, truth and constancy. The meaning of this may be found in the fact that the Earl has now publicly crowned the secret sovereign of his heart; he has at last married Elizabeth Vernon. This celebration of the Earl's constancy and truth is not in relation to the Poet, but to the Earl's Mistress and his marriage. He is 'constant in a wondrous excellence,' and therefore Shakspeare's verse is still confined to the praise of that constancy. These sonnets tell us that the Earl and his love were yet the Poet's only argument. Up to the present time he was writing to him and OF him.

Where art thou, Muse, that thou forget'st so long
To speak of that which gives thee all thy might?
Spend'st thou thy fury on some worthless song
Darkening thy power to lend base subjects light?
Return, forgetful Muse, and straight redeem
In gentle numbers time so idly spent;[1]
Sing to the ear that doth thy lays esteem
And gives thy pen both skill and argument!
Rise, restive Muse, my Love's sweet face survey,
If Time have any wrinkle graven there;
If any, be a satire to decay,
And make Time's spoils despiséd everywhere!
Give my Love fame faster than Time wastes life:
So thou prevent'st his scythe and crooked knife.
(100.)

[1] This lost time was redeemed not only by the writing of this group of personal sonnets, but also the dramatic series that follows them.

O truant Muse, what shall be thy amends
For thy neglect of truth in beauty dyed?
Both truth and beauty on my Love depends;
So dost thou too, and therein dignified:
Make answer, Muse! wilt thou not haply say,
'*Truth needs no colour with his colour fixed;*
Beauty no pencil, beauty's truth to lay:
But best is best if never intermixed?'
Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?
Excuse not silence so; for it lies in thee
To make him much outlive a gilded tomb,
And to be praised of ages yet to be!
Then do thy office, Muse; I teach thee how
To make him seem long hence as he is now.

(101.)

My love is strengthened, tho' more weak in seeming;
I love not less, tho' less the show appear;
That love is merchandised whose rich esteeming
The owner's tongue doth publish everywhere!
Our love was new and then but in the spring
When I was wont to greet it with my lays,
As Philomel in summer's front doth sing
And stops her pipe in growth of riper days:
Not that the summer is less pleasant now
Than when her mournful hymns did hush the night,
But that wild music burthens every bough
And sweets grown common lose their dear delight!
Therefore like her, I sometime hold my tongue,
Because I would not dull you with my song.

(102.)

Alack! what poverty my Muse brings forth,
That having such a scope to show her pride,
The argument, all bare, is of more worth
Than when it hath my added praise beside:
O blame me not if I no more can write!
Look in your glass, and there appears a face
That over-goes my blunt invention quite,
Dulling my lines and doing me disgrace!

Were it not sinful then, striving to mend,
To mar the subject that before was well?
For to no other pass my verses tend
Than of your graces and your gifts to tell;
And more, much more, than in my verse can sit
Your own glass shows you when you look in it.

(103.)

Why is my verse so barren of new pride,
So far from variation, or quick change?
Why, with the time, do I not glance aside
To new-found methods and to compounds strange?
Why write I still all one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a noted weed,
That every word doth almost tell my name,
Showing their birth, and whence they did proceed?
O know, sweet Love, I always write of you,
And you and love are still my argument;
So all my best is dressing old words new,
Spending again what is already spent:
For as the sun is daily new and old,
So is my love still telling what is told.

(76.)

What's in the brain that ink may character
Which hath not figured to thee my true spirit?
What's new to speak, what new to register,[1]
That may express my love, or thy dear merit?
Nothing, sweet boy! but yet like prayers divine,
I must each day say o'er the very same;
Counting no old thing old, thou mine, I thine,
Even as when first I hallowed thy fair name!
So that eternal love in love's fresh case
Weighs not the dust and injury of age,
Nor gives to necessary wrinkles place,
But makes antiquity for aye his page,
Finding the first conceit of love there bred,
Where time and outward form would show it dead.

(108.)

[1] 'What new to register.' The Quarto reads, 'What *now* to register,' but the opposition intended is, I think, between speaking and writing, and 'new' is the more immediately applicable to *registering*. Malone first made the change.

Let not my love be called idolatry,
Nor my beloved as an idol show,
Since all alike my songs and praises be
To one, of one, still such and ever so:
Kind is my love to-day, to-morrow kind,
Still constant in a wondrous excellence;
Therefore my verse to constancy confined,
One thing expressing, leaves out difference:
Fair, kind, and true, is all my argument,
Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words;
And in this change is my invention spent,
Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords!
Fair, kind, and true, have often lived alone,
Which three, till now, never kept seat in one.

(105.)

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

1598—9.

THE EARL TO ELIZABETH VERNON—THEIR FINAL RECONCILIATION: WITH SHAKSPEARE'S SONNET ON THEIR MARRIAGE.

WHATSOEVER Shakspeare intended to put into the sonnets is there, and may be found in them. Whatsoever character he meant to pourtray will be there depicted. Such was the constitution of his mind that his work is sure to be dramatically true; no matter what the subject may be. In the sonnets that *are* personal, there will be found nothing opposed to what we know, and have reason to believe, of the Poet's character. Nothing but what is perfectly compatible with that wise prudence, careful forethought, uprightness of dealing, stability of spirit, contentedness with his own lot, proverbial sweetness and loveableness of disposition which we know, not by conjecture, but because his possession of these virtues is the most amply attested fact of his life. Moreover, the personal sonnets always illustrate that modesty of his nature which was great as was his genius. But, in this group of sonnets, the character delineated is the exact opposite in every respect to that of Shakspeare; separated from his by a difference the most profound. This is a youth speaking—as in sonnet the 2nd—whereas Shakspeare continually harps on his riper age, or, as we have read it, his elder brotherhood to the youth who is his friend. And this

youth, who is the speaker here, has been headstrong and wilful, imprudent and thoughtless; unstable as wind and wave, and easily made the sport of both; he is choleric and quickly stirred to breaking out and flying off at random. Again and again has he given pain to those that loved him most, who have had to turn from his doings with averted eyes. Again and again has he left the beloved, and gone away as far as wind and wave would carry him. He has heedlessly done things which have made him the mark of scandal—

> 'A fixéd figure of the time,[1] for Scorn
> To point his slow unmoving finger at;'

made a fool of himself, as we say, and as he also says, publicly, to the view; 'gored his own thoughts' and made the heart of others bleed for him. He has been forgetful of that '*dearest love*' to which '*all bonds*' draw him closer and tie him tighter day by day; he has been wanting in those grateful offices of affection wherein he ought to have repaid the '*great deserts*' of the person addressed.

These sonnets are very dramatic; intensely personal to the speaker; the feeling goes deep enough to carry the writer most near to nature, therefore they are certain to be representatively true. They are pathetic with a passionate pleading; filled with real confessions; self-criminating, and quick with repentance. But they are not true to the nature of our Poet, they have no touch of kinship, no feature of likeness to him. They are, I repeat, in all respects the precise opposite to what we know of Shakspeare, and to all that he says of himself, or others say of him. If ever there was a soul of ripe serenity and capacious calm, of sweet and large affections, wise orderliness of life, and an imagination that had the deep stillness of brooding love, it was the soul of Shakspeare. His was not a mind to be troubled

[1] Surely this is the true reading of the above two lines—the 'of' and 'for' having changed places? Othello cannot mean that he is made into a clock or a dial, but the *laughing-stock* of the time?

and tossed by every breeze that blew, and billow that broke; not a temperament to be ever in restless eddy and ebb and flow; not a nature that was fussy or fretful, but steady and deep; of massive mould, majestic motion and smiling spaciousness. He was a man who could possess his soul in patience, and silently bide his time; who did not babble of his discontents with either tongue or pen.

Then, if Southampton be the friend who is addressed when Shakspeare speaks personally, his character should be to some extent reflected from Shakspeare's words; we should at least see his features, although in miniature, in Shakspeare's eyes. We know *his* character. It can be traced quite distinctly on the historic page. He was a brave and bounteous peer. A noble of nature's own making, munificent, chivalrous, full of warlike and other fire. But he was one of those who will have the flash and outbreak of the passionate mind; and when stirred, the quick fire was apt to leap out into a world of dancing sparks. He was quick and sudden in quarrel; his hand flew as swiftly to his swordhilt as the hot blood to his face; lacking in prudence and patience, and unstable in all things but his ardent friendships. Even these he must have tried sorely. His mounting valour was of the restless irrepressive kind which, if it cannot find vent in battles abroad, is likely to break out in broils at home. He was easily swayed, and frequently swerved aside by the continual cross-currents of his wilful wanton blood; one of the chosen friends and kindred spirits of the madcap and feather-triumph Earl of Essex! But he was also one of those generous, self-forgetting foolish souls whose vices are often more amiable than some people's virtues. All this we may read in the records of the time. All this we may gather from the sonnets which are addressed to him. And all this is figured in the liveliest form and colour in those sonnets which I say are spoken BY the Earl of Southampton. These paint the past history of the speaker, and they

render the Earl's character, actions, quarrels, wanderings, to the life. But this is not the character of the person here *addressed*, whoever the speaker may be, therefore the person here addressed cannot be the Earl of Southampton. This person is the quiet centre of the cyclone of emotions, exclamations, pleadings, protestations. This person is the stay-at-home—the 'home of love' from which the other has so often ranged. This person sits enthroned God-like in love, '*enskied and sainted*,' high over the region of storm and strife, the wild whirl of repentant words, having the prerogative to look down with sad calm eyes; the regal right to forgive! The person here addressed is of such purity and goodness that the speaker feels he needs to be disinfected before he can come near. This cannot be Southampton, as we know, by his character and conduct. And if Southampton be not the person addressed then it follows that Shakspeare is not the speaker; this we know likewise from his character and conduct. He was a man too wise and prudent to have done the foolish things that are here confessed. His was :—

> 'The soul that gathers wealth in still repose,
> Not losing all that floats in overflows,'

but resting with a large content in the quiet brimfulness of its force. His mind was too steadfastly anchored in the firm ground of a stable character, for him to be continually going to and fro. He was not the wanderer over the world, ranging time after time from his 'home of love' far as fortune would let him; hoisting sail to every wind that blew; turning and tossing as it were in the distraction of a 'madding fever'; listening to the song of the syrens; not bound on board with ears safely stopped, but landing to be flattered and fooled by their treacherous tears. This speaker is a traveller who has often been amongst foreigners ('unknown minds') which Shakspeare certainly was not—even if he ever went out of England

at all—any more than he could have been the man who had so blamefully looked 'on truth askance and strangely' to wilfully roam about the world, and make acquaintance with all the error he could meet. And if the supposed facts had been true; if his had been the nature to have these many mournful breakings-out and flyings-off at random; if his errors and wilfulness had been so grievous to his friends; if his light love had been this plaything, this weather-cock of change; if he had so shamefully, so disgracefully trampled his acknowledged sacred obligations under foot, and proved so faithless to his professed friendship; if he had committed these 'wretched errors' of the heart; why, then, the arguments would be all fatally false. For it is not possible that Shakspeare should confess all these sins and shames on his part, and afterwards urge that all these 'worse essays' were merely made to try the Earl's affection, and prove him to be the 'best of love;' that all the 'blenches' and ungratefulness and wanton inconstancy were only meant to test the virtue and constancy of the Earl's friendship. He could not urge that he had turned to vicious and immoral courses on purpose to purge his stomach of the Earl's 'sweetness,' on which he had overfed, and urge that the true way of growing healthier was to become diseased. He could not wilfully wander away from this dear friend—leave 'for nothing' all his 'sum of good' and then ask him to quarrel with Fortune as the *cause of his roving on account of his being a player or manager of a theatre, whose place and duty were to keep quietly at home* and work steadily; as we know Shakspeare did. He could not plead that these sad experiences had given his heart another youth, for the one that had been let run to waste; he who was nearly ten years older than the Earl, and always gives him the utmost benefit of the difference in their years and personal appearance. All such excuses from such a man who had been such a sinner would be

insultingly absurd. And it is most grossly improbable that Shakspeare should have spoken to his noble friend, as in sonnet 120, and had to regret that he had not been as generous or quick in forgiveness as that friend had been to him on a previous occasion, when we remember the modesty of the man. Still more gross is the idea that Shakspeare should offer to his patron and dear friend the worn-out remnant of his affections, like the broken-down rake in Burns's poem, who, having foundered his horse among harlots, 'gave the auld nag to the Lord.' Telling him that he would 'never more grind his appetite on newer proof, to try an older friend.' For, if Shakspeare were speaking according to the personal interpretation, that word could have but one meaning. And it is impossible to suppose that our Poet, who was so alive to all natural proprieties, could use it in addressing a male friend. Equally impossible is it to think of Shakspeare, the man of staid habit and grave masculine morality; the husband of good repute and the father of a family; the shrewd man of the world, conversant with men and affairs; the man who speaks of himself not only as ripe in years, but somewhat aged before his time; who, when he catches a glimpse of his own face, does so with an arch gravity or a jocose remark on the signs of age and the wear and tear of life; who is weather-beaten, chapped and tanned; in sonnet 73,—it is impossible that this man, of sober soul and grave wise speech, should afterwards be found pleading with his boy-friend that the cause of his lapses and frailties is that sportive wild blood of his which will have its frisky leaps and lavoltos, and asking, with an almost infantile innocence, 'why should false adulterate eyes' give it salutation? Why should they shoot their wicked lightnings to melt the sword of his naturally virtuous soul in its sheath, leaving him so unarmed and helpless to the wicked one who wants to take advantage of his tender youth? This is ineffably foolish to any

one who is at all *grounded* in the qualities of Shakspeare's character, or acquainted with such of the sonnets as are explicitly personal. Bad as they have tried to make him, Shakspeare did not think adultery good, nor lust altogether admirable—if we may trust the 129th sonnet, which is somewhat emphatic on the point and very much to our purpose. Yet such a theory, so blindly misleading and perniciously false, has been accepted, or allowed to pass almost unchallenged, by men who profess to believe in Shakspeare!

One of these sonnets has been held to indicate Shakspeare's disgust at his player's life. The image being drawn from the stage gives some countenance to this view. But it is not fitted to the relationship of poet and patron, and it is quite opposed to all that we learn of Shakspeare's character. It is not true that he had gone here and there and everywhere to make a fool of himself, when he was quietly getting a living for his wife and family in an upright, honest, prudent way. Nor could he with any the least propriety speak of making a fool of himself on the stage, which was the meeting-place of himself and the Earl; the fount of Shakspeare's honour, the spring of his good fortune; the known delight of Southampton, who often spent his time in doing nothing but *going to plays*. Nor have we ever heard of any '*harmful deeds*,' or doings of Shakspeare, occasioned in consequence of his connexion with the stage. Nor do we see how his name could be branded, or '*receive a brand*,' from his connexion with the theatre, or from his acts in consequence of his being a player. What name? He had no name apart from the theatre, and the friendships it had brought him. His name was created there. He had no higher standard of appeal. He had not stooped to authorship, or the player's life. His living depended *on* the theatre; he met and made his friends *at* the theatre; he was making his fortune *by* the theatre; how then

should he exclaim *against* the theatre? How could he receive a brand on his name *from* the theatre? Supposing him to have had a great dislike to the life and work, it would have been perfectly out of place, unnatural, and inartistic, to have thus expressed it point-blank to the generous friend who had exalted the 'poor player' and overleaped the player's life and lot and character, to shake him by the hand, and make him his bosom friend, however much the world might have looked down upon him! But I altogether doubt that he had any such dislike to his lot. I believe he neither pined in private nor complained in public, but that his thrift and prosperity were in great measure the result of content. John Davies might and did regret that Fortune had not dealt better by Shakspeare than in making him a player and playwright: but even he held that the stage only stained 'pure and gentle blood,' of which our Poet was not, although 'generous in mind and mood,' and one that 'sowed honestly for others to reap.'[1] Ben Jonson might kick against the 'loathed stage,' and Marston complain, but Shakspeare's was a career of triumph; he was borne from the beginning on a full tide of prosperity; the stage gave him that which he so obviously valued, worldly good fortune. He could not have been querulously decrying that success which his contemporaries were envying so much. Moreover, he was at heart a player, and enjoyed the pastime; this is apparent in his works, and according to evidence in sonnet 32 (p. 133), he lived a 'well-contented day.' Therefore he could not despise the art in which he delighted, and which was bringing him name, friends, and fortune. We have no proof whatever that he felt degraded by treading the stage, and we have proof that he did not forget or overlook his old theatre friends. He considered himself their '*fellow*' in 1616, when he remembered them in his will. A kindly thought, and just like him, but quite opposed to the personal

[1] *Scourge of Folly.*

interpretation of the sonnet. Besides which, if he had looked upon himself as the victim of Fortune, if she were responsible for his being a player, what motive would he have for self-reproach? Why should he cry 'Alas!' and ask to be pitied, and call for some moral disinfecting fluid, no matter how bitter, and seek to do 'double penance' when he was honestly getting his living according to the lot which had befallen him? He could not be the helpless victim of Fortune, and the headstrong cause of his own misfortune; and that is the mixture of character implied! There is a strong sense of personal wilfulness in doing 'harmful deeds.' Do you 'o'ergreen my bad,' and pity me, and 'wish I were renewed,' not merely my means of living!

I have no doubt that Shakspeare had been far more intent on getting his theatre renewed, and if the Earl, as has been suggested, gave our Poet assistance towards the building of the 'Globe' on Bankside, the personal interpretation of this sonnet would afford a singular comment on the Earl's generosity and Shakspeare's gratitude. Our Poet, in all likelihood, was thinking how tolerably well Fortune had so far provided for his life. And we may consider it pretty certain that his name never did 'receive a brand' on account of his 'public manners' bred in him through being a player. His brow never was branded by *public scandal.* And so evidently *public* are the person, the acts, the scandal of these sonnets, that we must have heard of them had they been Shakspeare's, just as we hear of the loose doings of Marlowe, Green, and the lesser men. It is no answer to my argument for any one to urge that Shakspeare may have done this or the other privately, and we not have heard of it. These are not private matters. It is no secret confession of hidden frailty. The subject is notorious; the scandal is public; and if Shakspeare were speaking, he would have done something for all the world to see branded on his brow. If his

manners had been such as to warrant the tone of these sonnets, his contemporaries must have seen them, and we should have heard of them.

There is one expression in this sonnet which has been identified as positively personal, because the speaker says that Fortune did not better for his life provide than *public means*. But that is the result of a preconceived hypothesis. It never seems to have been questioned whether a player of Elizabeth's time would speak of living by 'public means,' when the highest thing aimed at by the players was private patronage! except where they hoped to become the sworn servants of Royalty. If the Lord Chamberlain's servants were accounted public, it would be in a special sense, not merely because they were players; and certainly scandalous public manners were not likely to be any recommendation for such a position, or necessary result of it![1] In our time the phrase would apply, but the sense of the words, coupled with the theatre, is a comparatively modern growth. Even if it had applied, it was an impossible comment for our Poet to make on what he had been striving to do, and on what Southampton had in all probability helped him to accomplish. For the truth is, the 'Globe' was built in order that the players might reach a wider public, and Shakspeare was one of the first to create what we call the play-going *public!* The 'Blackfriars' was a private theatre, chiefly dependent on private patronage; the nobility preferred the private theatres; the 'Globe' was meant to appeal to the lower orders—or, as we say, the general public. With what conscience, then, could the successful innovator in search of the 'public' complain of having to live by 'public means'? Here, however, the meaning, as illustrated in the context, is that the speaker has to live in the public eye in a way that is apt to beget public manners.

[1] The title of 'the King's Servants' was only conferred on Shakspeare's company of players by the Privy Seal of 1603.

He lives the public life which attracts public notice. The opposition is between public and private life,[1] rather than between riches and poverty, or modes of payment—the public means of living his life, rather than the public means of getting a living—that he wishes 'renewed.' His public is the only public of Shakspeare's time; the Court circle and public members of the state. And the person of whom Shakspeare wrote thus must have been a public character in such sense. He must have moved in that circle, and been of far greater importance than a player could possibly be, either in his own estimation or that of the world at large. Such an one, for example, as is spoken of in sonnet 9 (p. 113), whom, should he die single, the 'world will be his widow,' and bewail him 'like a makeless wife.' That is our poet's view of the 'public' man. And sonnet 25 will tell us exactly what Shakspeare did not consider 'public,' for he therein expressly says that Fortune has debarred him from '*public*' honours, and, as he was a player then, the same fortune must have debarred him from 'public' shame, resulting from living a player's life.

The innermost sense in which the Poet spoke of the public man in sonnet 111 I take to be this. Shakspeare's great anxiety was to get his dear friend married. That is the Alpha and Omega of the Southampton sonnets. He looked to the wedded life as a means of saving his friend from many sad doings and fretful fooleries. But he was a public person, whom a monarch could and did forbid to marry; who could not wed the wife of his heart without a sort of public permission; who had to get married by public means.[2] Shakspeare looked to this fact as the cause of the Earl's public manners; his broils in Court, his breakings-out of temper, his getting into such bad courses and lamentable scrapes, as made Mistress Vernon

[1] In a letter written by the Earl of Southampton to Sir Thomas Roe, December 24th, 1623, he expresses himself to be in love with a country life.

[2] The affair with Willoughby would not have given rise to *public* scandal but for its having occurred at Court.

and other friends of the Earl mourn. The Poet considered that his friend had been irritated and made reckless by the obstinacy of Elizabeth the Queen in opposing his marriage with Elizabeth his love. And he holds Fortune to be in a great measure responsible for the Earl's harmful doings. This view is corroborated in sonnet 124, where the Earl is made to speak of his love as having been the 'Child of State.' Shakspeare did not consider himself a public man living by public means, nor fancy himself of public importance. Of this there is the most convincing proof in many personal expressions. In these personal sonnets, he does not propose to speak of himself as one of the public performers on the stage of life, but like Romeo going to the feast at Capulet's house, he will be a torch-bearer, and shed a light on the many-coloured moving scene rather than join in the dance. He'll be a 'candle-holder and look on.' He will conceal himself as much as possible under the light which he carries, and hold it so that the lustre shall fall chiefly on the face of his friend who is in public, and whom he seeks to illumine with his love from the place where he stands in his privacy apart. As for Shakspeare's 'manners,' we know little of them in any *public* sense, but, from all printed report, we learn that his manners were those of a natural gentleman of divine descent, whose moral dignity and brave bearing ennobled a lowly lot, and made a despised profession honourable for ever. It was his manners quite as much as his mental superiority that silenced his envious rivals. It was his 'manners' especially that elicited the apology from Chettle. It was his manners that inspired Jonson with his full-hearted exclamation, 'He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature.' It was his 'manners'—his good reputation—that gave the greatest emphasis to the pleading on behalf of the 'poor players' in the letter ascribed to the Earl of Southampton. And so far as the word public can be applied to Shak-

speare and his 'manners,' so far John Davies, in his 'Humour's Heaven on Earth' (p. 215), speaks of him precisely in that sense, for he speaks of Shakspeare as he saw him before his own public in the theatrical world, and the theatre, says Dekker's 'Gull's Horn-Book,' is '*your Poet's Royal Exchange.*' Davies compliments him, in the year 1605, as not being one of those who act badly 'by *custom of their manners*,' not one of those whose *ill-actions in life* make them *ill-actors on the stage.* He speaks of Shakspeare as one who is of *good* wit, of *good* courage, of *good* shape, of *good* parts, and *good* altogether; consequently *his manners, public and private, must have been good.*

We may conclude, then, that Shakspeare did not speak of himself as a public man living by public means, nor bewail his public manners; that he did not draw the image from the stage, and thus mark the platform on which he stood—the place where he was making his fortune—for the purpose of saying how degraded he felt there, and of flinging his defiance at public opinion and private malice; scattering his scorn over critics and flatterers, and insulting his patron in the most reckless way; that he did not lower and abase his brow to receive the brand of vulgar scandal, and then coolly ask his insulted friend to efface the impression—the stamp of scandal and dirt of degradation—with a kiss of loving pity; that a man who felt degraded by his calling, and branded on the brow because of his being a player, could not have occasion to stop his ears and be deaf as an adder to flattery; that the personal interpretation derived from the expression 'public means' is at war with the whole feeling of these sonnets, and the feeling here, as elsewhere, is the greatest fact of all; that, in short, it is not Shakspeare who is speaking; and the personal theory puts everything into confusion; it is sufficient warrant for all that Steevens said of the sonnets; it leads people to think Shakspeare wrote nonsense at times, and exaggerated continually. He did

nothing of the kind. I shall prove that he wrote these sonnets with a perfect adherence to literal facts, and that his art in doing so is exquisite, as in his plays. Also, the personal rendering deepens and darkens the impression of things which, when applied to the Earl and his Mistress, do not mean much, and are merely matter for a sonnet, not for the saddest of all Shakspearian tragedies:—

THE EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON TO ELIZABETH VERNON.

O, never say that I was false of heart,
Though absence seemed my flame to qualify:
As easy might I from myself depart
As from my soul, which in thy breast doth lie:
That is my home of love: if I have ranged,
Like him that travels[1] I return again,
Just to the time, not with the time exchanged,
So that myself bring water for my stain:
Never believe, tho' in my nature reigned
All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,
That it could so preposterously be stained,
To leave for nothing all thy sum of good:
For nothing this wide universe I call,
Save thou, my Rose![2] in it thou art my All.

(109.)

Alas, 'tis true, I have gone here and there
And made myself a motley to the view:
Gored[3] mine own thoughts; sold cheap what is most dear;
Made old offences of affections new:
Most true it is that I have look'd on truth
Askance and strangely; but, by all above,
These blenches gave my heart another youth,
And worse essays proved thee my best of love!

[1] 'Like him that travels'—he has ranged as a traveller.

[2] 'My rose.' 'O, Rose of May'—Laertes speaking of his sister Ophelia, 'Hamlet,' act iv. sc. 5.

[3] 'Gored mine own thoughts.' So Achilles, in 'Troilus and Cressida,' 'My fame is shrewdly gored!'

Now all is done, have what shall have no end:[1]
Mine appetite I never more will grind
On newer proof to try an older friend—
A God in love,[2] to whom I am confined!
Then give me welcome, next my heaven the best,
Even to thy pure and most, most loving breast.

(110.)

O, for my sake do you with Fortune chide,
The guilty Goddess of my harmful deeds,[3]
That did not better for my life provide
Than public means which public manners breeds:

[1] 'Now all is done, *have* what shall have no end.'
This Malone altered to—
'Now all is done, *save* what shall have no end,'
showing that he had altogether missed the meaning. The wanderings here spoken of are not metaphorical, but the literal facts of the speaker's life. He has been a great traveller. As a traveller he left the lady, as a traveller he returns, and as a traveller he asks for his welcome home. His ranging about the world has been more from necessity than choice, on account of his being a public man, a servant of the State, a soldier—that is why Fortune is held responsible. Now, all is done: the wanderings that were but temporary are over; accept the love, he pleads, which is eternal. In short, he returns this time to marry his lady, and renew his life:

'Pity me, then, and *wish I were renewed.*'

[2] 'A God in love.' An expression beyond sex, indicating the strength of feeling that needs the most masculine utterance, akin to that which made Elizabeth a prince and a governor, and hailed Maria Theresa as a king in the Magyar Assembly. So in the Bible, Man is used to express the sum total of sex. A 'God in love' is really only warranted by its being addressed to a woman. Also, a 'Goddess in love' would not have suited, because it is the greatness, the divinity of the love, rather than of the person, that is meant to be conveyed. The expression, applied to a woman, is suggestively illustrated in the 'Comedy of Errors.' Antipholus of Syracuse replies to Luciana, 'Sweet mistress—what your name is else I know not,' and he asks—

'*Are you a God?* would you *create me new?*
Transform me then, and to your power I'll yield.'

This is not the only instance of Shakspeare's audacity producing something extraordinary by reversing the ordinary—a perilous process in lesser hands! In 'Julius Cæsar' he thus intensifies the feeling of scorn:—

'His *coward lips* did *from their colours fly.*'

Which dash of soldierly daring Warburton called a 'poor quibble!'

[3] In sonnet 69 (p. 241) it was the *person addressed* whose deeds had been so harmful; whose name had grown so common.

Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the Dyer's hand;
Pity me then and wish I were renewed:
Whilst, like a willing patient, I will drink
Potions of eysell 'gainst my strong infection:
No bitterness that I will bitter think,
Nor double-penance, to correct correction:
Pity me then, dear friend, and I assure ye,
Even that your pity is enough to cure me.

(111.)

Your love and pity doth the impression fill
Which vulgar scandal stampt upon my brow;[1]
For what care I who calls me well or ill,
So you o'er-green my bad, my good allow:
You are my all-the-world, and I must strive
To know my shames and praises from your tongue;
None else to me, nor I to none alive,
That my steeled sense or changes right or wrong—
In so profound abysm I throw all care
Of others' voices, that my adder's sense
To critic and to flatterer stoppéd are:
Mark how with my neglect I do dispense—
You are so strongly in my purpose bred
That all the world besides methinks are dead.

(112.)

'Tis better to be vile than vile-esteemed,
When not to be receives reproach of being,
And the just pleasure lost, which is so deemed,
Not by our feeling, but by others' seeing:
For why should others' false adulterate eyes
Give salutation to my sportive blood?
Or on my frailties why are frailer spies,
Which in their wills count bad what I think good?
No, I am that I am, and they that level
At my abuses reckon up their own:

[1] In sonnet 70 (p. 226) it was the *person addressed* who had been the mark of slander and subject of public scandal.

I may be straight tho' they themselves be bevel;
By their rank thoughts my deeds must not be shown:
Unless this general evil they maintain
All men are bad and in their badness reign.

(121.)

Accuse me thus—that I have scanted all
Wherein I should your great deserts repay;
Forgot upon your dearest love to call,
Whereto all bonds do tie me day by day;[1]
That I have frequent been with unknown minds
And given to Time your own dear-purchased right;[2]
That I have hoisted sail to all the winds
Which should transport me farthest from your sight:
Book both my wilfulness and errors down,
And on just proof surmise accumulate;
Bring me within the level of your frown,
But shoot not at me in your wakened hate;
Since my appeal says, I did strive to prove
The constancy and virtue of your love.

(117.)

Like as, to make our appetites more keen,
With eager compounds we our palate urge,
As, to prevent our maladies unseen,
We sicken, to shun sickness, when we purge;
Even so, being full of your ne'er-cloying sweetness,
To bitter sauces did I frame my feeding
And, sick of welfare, found a kind of meetness
To be diseased ere that there was true needing;
Thus policy in love, to anticipate
The ills that were not, grew to faults assured;
And brought to medicine a healthful state
Which, rank of goodness, would by ill be cured:
But thence I learn, and find the lesson true,
Drugs poison him that so fell sick of you.

(118.)

[1] See the extract from Mr. Chamberlain's letter for a very natural gloss on this line.

[2] What dearly-purchased right to Shakspeare's companionship could the Earl of Southampton have had which the poet had 'given to Time?' The speaker here is the person addressed by Shakspeare himself in sonnet 70 (p. 226), as 'being wooed of Time.'

What potions have I drunk of Siren tears,
Distilled from lymbecks foul as hell within;[1]
Applying fears to hopes, and hopes to fears,
Still loosing when I saw myself to win!
What wretched errors hath my heart committed,
Whilst it hath thought itself so blessed never!
How have mine eyes out of their spheres been flitted[2]
In the distraction of this madding fever!
O benefit of ill! now I find true
That better is by evil made still better:
And ruined love, when it is built anew,
Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater:
So I return rebuked to my content,
And gain by ills thrice more than I have spent.
(119.)

[1] In Sonnet 67 (p. 239) it was the person addressed who was dwelling in infectious society, and gracing impiety with his presence!

[2] 'Flitted.' The Quarto reads 'fitted,' but I cannot think that Shakspeare's omnipresent vision and wakeful humour would allow him to say the eyes had been *fitted out* of their spheres, when, if they had been *fitted* at all, it would have been in their spheres. It must, I apprehend, be a misprint for 'flitted,' the word that, above all others, signifies a '*moving*' or *removal* to the Scotch mind. Spenser makes use of the word 'flit':—

'For on a sandy hill that still did *flitt*,
And fall away, it mounted was full hie.'

Fairfax's 'Tasso' (5, 58) has it—

'Alas, that cannot be, for he is *flit*
Out of this camp.'

In Psalm 56 we find, 'Thou tellest my '*flittings*.' And Puttenham calls the figure *Metastasis* the 'Flitting Figure,' or the 'Remove.' The meaning of the line is, *how have mine eyes been moved out of their spheres*. It is susceptible of a double interpretation. Figuratively, how have mine eyes wandered like those of Solomon's fool, that 'rounded about in the darkness,' instead of wisely keeping watch in my head. But Shakspeare takes his stand so firmly on the physical fact (want of faith in this characteristic of his mind has prevented our understanding the sonnets, made it impossible for us to follow, because we did not trust the element!), that I rather conclude he meant literally *how have mine eyes been drawn inward by the pain I have suffered, until they are sunken in their sockets*; they have *been* 'flitted' in the distraction of this maddening fever. A motion the exact opposite to that of the eyes *starting from their spheres*, in 'Hamlet,' under the influence of great terror.

That you were once unkind [1] befriends me now,
And for that sorrow which I then did feel
Needs must I under my transgression bow,
Unless my nerves were brass or hammered steel
For if you were by my unkindness shaken
As I by yours, you've passed a hell of time,
And I, a Tyrant, have no leisure taken
To weigh how once I suffered in your crime:
O, that our night of woe might have remembered
My deepest sense how hard true sorrow hits,
And soon to you as you to me then tendered
The humble salve which wounded bosoms fits!
But let [2] your trespass now become a fee:
Mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransom me.
(120.)

The speaker of these sonnets is one in character and circumstance with him who has left his Mistress for the journey in the earlier pages, and whom we find on distant shores ('limits far remote'), with 'injurious distance' of earth and sea between him and his beloved, to whom his thoughts are sent in tender embassy of love. The same speaker as him of sonnet 97 (p. 248), who has again been absent through the spring, summer, and autumn of the year. And here he speaks of those absences; says what a traveller he has been; acknowledges having hoisted sail to every wind that would blow him farthest from her sight; been frequently with 'unknown minds,' or in foreign countries, when he ought to have stayed with her at home. It is the same person whom Shakspeare addresses in sonnet 70 (p. 226), as being the mark of slander and envy, one of those who attract the breath of slander and scandal naturally as flames draw air. In these sonnets he speaks of being slandered, and of vulgar scandal as branding his

[1] 'Once unkind.' In the lady's jealousy of her cousin, Penelope Rich.

[2] The Quarto reads, 'but *that* your trespass,' which somewhat obscures the meaning; *let* is far more in accordance with the pleading tone of the sonnet.

brow. It is the same as him of whom Shakspeare said—'Ah, wherefore with *infection* should he live (sonnet 67). Also in sonnet 94 (p. 241):—

> 'But if that flower with base *infection* meet,
> The basest weed outbraves his dignity.'

And here, in pleading with his Mistress, this ranging sinning Lover is willing to drink 'potions of Eysell 'gainst his "strong *infection*!"' The same as him of sonnet 69 (p. 241), whose mind the Poet said the world measured by his ill *deeds*, and who had grown common in the mouths of men. Here he bewails those *harmful deeds* of his which have made him grow common, or the subject of vulgar scandal. This is the same victim of his fate as we have before met, who was in disgrace with Fortune, sonnet 29 (p. 166); made lame by Fortune's dearest spite, in sonnet 37 (p. 168); had suffered the spite of Fortune once more, in sonnet 90 (p. 246); and he now pleads in mitigation of his offences that Fortune is the guilty goddess of his harmful doings; she who has so driven him about the world. He confesses to all that Shakspeare had mourned in the personal sonnets; acknowledges that 'sensual fault' of his nature which Elizabeth Vernon had before spoken of (at p 207); makes what excuses he can, and begs that all errors and failings may be blotted from the book of her remembrance.

It is the plea of a penitent Lover praying his Mistress to forgive his sins against true love; his full confession of all that he has done, and his reply to what others have said on the subject of his doings. He asks her not to say that he was false at heart because of his absences from her, though these may have made him seem indifferent, and appeared to diminish his love. He could just as easily part from himself as from his soul, which dwells in her breast; so deeply rooted in reality is his love, in despite of surface appearances. Her bosom is his home of love,

to which he returns like a traveller; that is the port of his pleasure and soft rest of all his pain. He comes back, too, true to the time appointed, and not changed with the time. Moreover, he brings water for his stain; comes back to her in tears. But though he is stained or disfigured by many frailties, she must not believe that he could be so stained, so disfigured from the shape she first knew and loved, as to leave for nothing the sum of good and summit of glory which he attains in her, for he counts as nothing the whole wide universe compared with her who is creation's crown, his Rose! his All! Alas! he admits it is quite true what she says of his wanderings, his flyings-off at random, his making such a fool of himself in public. He has gone here and there—a motley to the view—made light of his love, and been an old offender to his new affection. It is most true that he has shied at the truth, flinched from it, looked at it coyly, reservedly, as though it were a stranger, and has not made the beloved his wife as he ought to have done; but these starts and far-flights from the path of right have given his heart another youth, his affection a fresh beginning, and his worse attempts have proved her to be his best of love. Now all is done; his wanderings and voyagings are over; he begs her to accept what shall have no end, his devoted undivided love, which shall be henceforth lived in her presence. He has come home, as we say, for good and all, and if she will but forgive him this one little last time, he will never do so any more. He will not again sharpen his old appetite for arms and adventure on any newer further proof to try this dear friend, who was his before his war-career and wanderings began—this 'God in love' to whom he is so bounden. 'Then give me welcome to the best place next heaven, thy pure and most, most loving breast.' And 'do not think the worst of me; quarrel a little with Fortune. She is guilty of much that I have done. She placed me in a public position, in the power

of a Queen who so long tried to hinder me from making you mine own; made me live so much in the public eye, and drove me to do things which have been so talked about by the public tongue.' Thence it arises that his name has been made the mark of scandal, and his nature has been almost subdued to *what it works in*, like the dyer's hand. And here we come upon a striking example of the way in which the 'pith and puissance' of the sonnets have been unappreciated and unperceived. They have been read as imagery alone, images painted on air and not founded on facts, without any grasp of the meaning which the images were only intended to convey and heighten, whereas the value of Shakspeare's images lies in their second self, and this has so often been invisible to the reader. The image of the dyer's hand is well-known, and considered to be fine, yet that which it symbols has never been seen. The perfection of its use, the very clasp of the comparison, the touch which makes the image absolutely alive, lie in the fact that the speaker is a man of arms, a soldier, a fighter, apt to carry his public profession into the practice of his private life; and thus he speaks of his nature as subdued to what it works in, and his hand as wearing the colour of blood—dyed in blood! Therein lies the likeness to the dyer's hand! (In 'King John' we have the soldiers'

'Purpled hands
Dyed in the dyeing slaughter of their foes.')

'Pity me then on this account, and wish me better —my life renewed. I would willingly drink "potions of Eysell" for what I have wilfully done. I should think no bitterness bitter that would disinfect me, no penance too hard for my correction. But pity me, dear friend, and your pity will be enough to cure me. Your love and pity suffice to efface the mark which common talk stamped on my brow. What do I care

how their tongues wag, or reck what they say of me, so that your tenderness folds up my faults as the green grass hides the grave, or the ivy's embrace conceals the scars of time. You are my all-the-world, the only voice I listen to. To all others I turn a deaf ear, and in fact all the rest of the world are dead to me.'

Then follows a bit of special pleading, only pardonable to one who, in regard to the report of others, feels more sinned against than sinning. Some 'carry-tale,' some 'putter-on,' some 'please-man,' has been busy with his name and his amusements, or some babbling gossip of a woman has falsely interpreted his doings. Against such he can make a better defence. The spies on his frailties are themselves frailer than he is. The Court lady who has spoken of his loose conduct has herself looked on him with wanton wooing eyes. The persons aimed at in this sonnet may be Lady Rich and Ambrose Willoughby. Whoever they are, he scorns to be measured by their rule. They desire to think bad and speak ill of that which he thinks good. In speaking of him, they do but reckon up their own abuses. He may be straight, though they be crooked—*that* may be why the estimate is wrong; the measurement untrue—and his doings must not be judged by their foul thoughts. The summing-up of his reply says that he is not so bad as they would have him seem, and no worse in a general way than others are. He goes on to show her how she can put the case against him more justly: 'Accuse me thus: that I have come short in all I owe to your love and worth; forgot to call upon your most active love, in the name of husband, to which all bonds—especially that nearer tie of life-in-life—do bind me closer daily; that I have given to Time your rights, which were purchased by you so dearly at the cost of long-suffering and sore heart-ache and many tears; that I have hoisted sail to every wind that blew, which would waft me the farthest away from you; been abroad fre-

quently, and spent my time amongst foreigners instead of being with you at home; book both my wilfulness and errors down, all that you know and can suspect, and bring me within sight of my doom; take aim, but do not shoot at me in your awakened hatred. My appeal says I only did these things to prove your constancy, and test the virtue of your love. As we whet the appetite and urge the palate with "eager compounds," and "sicken to shun sickness" when we purge, so did I turn to bitter things because I was so filled with your sweetness. I was so well that there was a sort of satisfaction in being ill.' The lover finds a kind of fitness in 'being diseased ere that there was true needing.' But this policy of his love, which anticipated by inoculation the ills that were not, grew to 'faults assured.' There was something wrong in the *virus* that he had not bargained for. And he suffered much in recovering the healthy state, which 'rank of goodness' must needs be cured by ill. His experience has taught him that his medical course was not altogether a success; he finds the drugs poison him who had fallen sick of her. But what doses he has swallowed in his circuitous course in search of health! He has sailed the seas, and listened to the songs of the sirens, and been flattered and fooled by their tears; he has drunk potions distilled from lymbecks foul as hell within; set fears against hopes and hopes against fears. He has played the game in which the winner loses most. He has committed the most wretched errors of the heart whilst he was thinking himself never so blessed. What a blind fool he has been! How his eyes have been flitted out of their proper spheres in the distraction of this maddening fever, engendered of war and wandering. But there is this benefit in evil, that it serves to show the good in a clearer light; makes the best things better. And love that has been rent asunder may be joined anew, like other fractured articles, the newly soldered part becoming the

strongest, even firmer than at first. So he returns from his evil courses, his erratic wanderings, his visionary pursuit of pleasure, his futile imitation of the boy and butterfly—humbled and sobered, to the home of his heart and the seat of his content, a sadder and a wiser man; sufficiently so to gain by his experience three-fold more than he has spent in his folly, and to discover how sweet are the uses of adversity.

The last argument urged for the making up of this love-quarrel contains a reference to an old falling-out, in which the lady had accused her lover wrongfully. 'That you were once unkind to me is fortunate for me now! When I think of what I suffered on that occasion, it makes me feel doubly what I have caused you to bear; for if you have been as much pained by my unkindness as I was by yours, then you have suffered a hell indeed; and I, a tyrant, did not for a moment think how you were suffering, even in remembering how I myself once suffered by the wrong you did to me. I wish now that our dark night of sadness had reminded me how hard true sorrow hits; what cruel blows the hand of love can give; and that I had come to you as quickly and tendered to you as frankly the balm that befits a wounded heart, as you then came to me with healing, reconciliation, and peace! But let your fault of the Past now become a fee; my wrong ransoms your's; your wrong must ransom me!'

We shall see by referring to the life of Southampton that he went abroad three years running after meeting with Mistress Vernon. In the year 1596, he hurriedly left England to follow the Earl of Essex, who was gone on the expedition to Cadiz. Being too late for the fighting in that year, I conjecture that he joined his friend Roger Manners, Earl of Rutland, who was then making a tour of France, Italy and Switzerland. In the year 1597 he was with Essex on the Island Voyage, in command of the 'Garland.' And in the following year he

left England to offer his sword to Henry IV. of France, and was again absent for some months. He had thus been in foreign countries, mixed with 'unknown minds'—people who do not speak our language—and to do this he had taken advantage of every breeze that would fill his sail which had flapped idly whilst his vessel lay lazily in harbour, and he eagerly waited the tide and whistled for a wind. This he had done in a reckless mood, and 'given to Time;' he had spent the time away from his mistress, which was her's by right, and dearly purchased too.

It will be seen that the speaker of the second of these sonnets has *made himself* a Motley to the view. If he had been speaking of wearing the Fool's coat of many colours, he would not have been necessarily making a fool of himself. The image is not used in that sense. If he had been playing the Fool's part on the stage, it would be Fortune that had made him a Motley to the view; not himself. Here, however, the speaker has made a fool of himself, not by wearing the player's motley. He does not mean that he has *played* the Fool in jest, but that he has *been* a fool in sad earnest, by his wanderings about the world, his absence from the dear bosom on which he yearns to pillow his head at last, his manifold offences to this affection; his starts from rectitude; his looking on truth with a sidelong glance; and, most of all, his quarrels in public, in the camp, in the Court, in the street, whereby he has made himself a Motley in public to the view, and become the subject of a public scandal. He has been the fool who had not the privilege of bearing the Clown's bauble and wearing the many-coloured coat. 'I wear not Motley in my brain,' says the Fool in 'Twelfth Night;' this was exactly how the young Earl had worn it. All the literalness is in the fact, not in the image; it is Southampton to the life, not Shakspeare following his profession.

Then the confession of sonnet 119 can only have been made to a woman. It would have no meaning from a

man to a man. It is a confession to a woman that the speaker has been beguiled by the siren tears of other women, who were false and foul. He is penitent for those wretched errors which he has thus committed, still losing when he fancied he was the winner. He asks forgiveness for this among his other wanderings. He makes a comparison, and appeals from the false love to the true, which he now sees in the truer light, and vows to be eternally true. It is out of nature for Shakspeare to plead in this way. He could not have left the Earl, nor come back to him; could not protest the truth of his love in any such sense as is here implied. Besides which, if the dark story had been well-founded, he would not then have left his friend to follow the sirens. His passionate outpourings on that occasion would be in reproach of the Earl for having left *him*, and for being lured away by the woman. It was the Earl who was represented as going astray, not the Poet. All that he wanted was to be left in quiet possession of his cockatrice, and keep his friend the Earl true to him. The falsehood as well as the wandering was the friend's. Shakspeare showed no desire to desert his friend for a mistress; no wish to leave his mistress for his friend. He was only anxious to keep both, and to keep them apart from each other. His grief was not that he loved the woman, but that his friend also loved her; not that the mistress had taken his heart from his friend, but his friend from him to herself. Position and effects are quite different to those supposed to have been represented in those earlier sonnets, and the confession here has no fitting relationship to the past in that way; no meaning as from man to man.

In the life and character of Southampton alone shall we discover the subject of this group of sonnets, spoken by the Earl to his much-enduring mistress, Elizabeth Vernon. There only will be found the opposition of Fortune, the breaking-out and 'blenches' of rebellious blood, the

harmful doings that were the cause of common scandal, the absences abroad, and all the trials of that true love here addressed. Also, in the Earl's case only are the excuses on the score of Fortune at all admissible. Shakspeare was really a favourite of Fortune, both in his life and friendship; she smiled on him graciously. Nor is there a single complaint against her in the whole of the personal sonnets; neither can we see that he had any reason to complain. He does not accredit Fortune with any spite towards him, nor show any himself. But, as we have seen, Fortune was against the Earl, his friend, in the person of the Queen, and her opposition to his marriage; and but for his being a *public* man and so much in the power of the Court for appointment and preferment, he would not have had so long and trying a fight with Fortune. He could have carried off his love and lived a calmer life; he would have escaped many a scar that he received in the struggle with such an untoward Fortune as at length landed him by the side of Essex at the scaffold foot, although he had not to mount the steps. He was also a soldier of Fortune, not only fighting under the English Crown, but seeking service and glad of any fighting that could be got. As a soldier so circumstanced, and a man of so fiery a spirit that it led him into brawls, he could fairly say—

> '*Thence* comes it that my name receives a brand,
> And almost thence my nature is subdued
> To what it works in, like the dyer's hand:
> Pity me then and WISH *I were renewed.*'

Poor fellow! he was continually 'in for it.' No doubt there were many things known to Shakspeare and Mrs. Vernon that have not come down to us, besides the proposed duels which the Queen had to prohibit, and the hubbub in Court, for which 'vulgar scandal' stamped the Earl's brow, and Elizabeth Vernon effaced the impression with her 'love and pity'; but we know quite enough.

Thus, in Southampton's life, we can identify every circumstance touched upon in this group of sonnets; veritable facts that quicken every figure and make every line alive.

Rowland Whyte in his letters, and Shakspeare in these lines, chronicle the same occurrences and paint companion pictures of the same character, whilst the sonnets as clearly and recognisably reflect the image and motion of the young Earl's mind, the impetuous currents of his nature, as any portrait could present to us the features of his face. In all respects the opposite to the character in whose presence we feel ourselves, when Shakspeare personally speaks, and we hear the ground-tone of a weightier mind, and the feeling has a more sober certainty, the thought a more quiet depth; the music tells of no jarring string.

Sonnet 116 is a personal one; the speaker in it is the writer of it. And it is sufficient evidence that the sonnets which we have called confessional do not, cannot, refer to Shakspeare's doings, pourtray his character, or express his feelings. If they had, this sonnet would be an amazing conclusion, and contain his own utter condemnation, spoken with an unconscionable jauntiness of tone. He would have been a sinner in each particular against the law and gospel of true love, which he now expounds so emphatically. 'Love's not Time's fool;' yet, on his own confession, he would have cruelly and continually made it the fool of Time and sport of accident. Love is 'an ever-fixéd mark;' he says, and he would have wilfully and wantonly cut himself adrift from its resting-place. 'Love alters not;' but he would have been moved lightly as a feather with every breath of change. If he had been the speaker in the foregoing sonnets, he could not now say: '*Let me not* to the marriage of *true* minds admit impediments.' He could not call himself *true*, if so *false*. He could not have uttered his own condemnation with so airy and joyous a swing; so lusty a sense of freedom.

He could not thus exult in the genuine attributes of true love, and say, 'if this be error and *upon me proved*, I never writ, nor no man ever loved.' It would have been proved only too clearly that he was in error, or else that he was a bold hypocrite—if he were the guilty one who had before confessed! But the line, 'I never writ, nor no man ever loved,' almost divides the subject into its two parts, and points out the two speakers. It shows Shakspeare to be the writer on a subject extraneous to himself except as writer. And here the poet is commenting upon a matter quite external, the particulars of which do not, and the generalities cannot, apply to him personally. The comment, too, is on the very facts confessed by the scapegrace of the previous sonnets. Those were the confessions of a love that had not been altogether true; this is the exaltation of the highest, holiest love. It is Shakspeare's own voice heard in conclusion of the quarrelling and unkindness; his summing-up of the whole matter. His own spirit shines through this sonnet. It is a perfectly apposite discourse on the loves of Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon. The confessional sonnets were written in illustration of the last full reconciliation of this couple, whose love did not run smooth outwardly, which is so apt to beget ripples inwardly. They were married in the year following that in which the hubbub in Court and the consequent scandal had occurred, and this sonnet is in celebration of the happy event.

SHAKSPEARE ON THE EARL'S MARRIAGE.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments: Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove!
Oh, no; it is an ever-fixéd mark
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken!
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, altho' his height be taken:

Love's not Time's fool, tho' rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom: [1]
If this be error and upon me proved
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

(116.)

This is a marriage service of the Poet's own, with an obvious reference to the marriage service of the English Church. He gives his answer, he who knows all the circumstances of the case and is acquainted with all his friend's failings, to the appeal as to whether any witness knows of sufficient cause or impediment why these two should not be joined together in the holy matrimonial bond. The Poet knows of their quarrels and of the Earl's wild or wanton courses; but he says firmly, let me not admit these as impediments to the marriage of true minds. If my friend has done all these sad things which have been confessed, yet is it not the nature of true love to alter and change when it finds change in another; because one has wandered and removed literally that is not sufficient reason why the other should waver and fly off in spirit. Appearances themselves are false where hearts are true.

The supreme object of Shakspeare's sonnets was to aid in getting the Earl, his friend, married, and see him safe in Mistress Vernon's arms, encompassed with content. This is the be-all and end-all of his song; his one theme with many variations. He woos him towards the door of the sanctuary with the most amorous diligence and coaxing words. He tries by many winning ways to get the youth to enter. He rebukes him when he flinches from it; and the last effort he makes for the consumma-

[1] 'Even to the edge of doom;' so in 'All's Well that Ends Well,' to the 'extreme edge of hazard,' and in 'Macbeth,' the 'crack of doom,' i.e., the breaking up of nature.

tion so devoutly wished almost amounts to a visible *push* from behind. He has attacked all the obstacles that stood in the way; scolded the Earl for his 'blenches' from the right path; no mother ever more anxious about some wild slip of rebellious blood; and now, when he is safe at last, with the rosy fetters round his neck, and the golden ring is on the finger of the wife, their Poet grows jubilant with delight; a great weight is off his heart, and he breathes freely on the subject of the Earl's courtship for the first time; can even speak with a dash of joyful abandon. The writer is in his cheeriest mood and the sonnet has a festal style. The *true* love that is apotheosized in this wedding strain is not the affection of Shakspeare; not the love of the Earl, his friend; but the steadfast, pure and lofty love of Elizabeth Vernon! This is the love that has not been the fool or slave of Time; that has altered not with his brief hours and weeks, but has borne all the trials; been true to the very 'edge of doom' and kept her heart firmly fixed even when, as Rowland Whyte hints, her mind threatened to waver and give way. She did not alter when she found an alteration in him; did not 'bend with the *remover* (the traveller and wanderer) to remove.' She was 'the ever-fixéd mark;' the lighthouse in the storm, that 'looked on tempests and was never shaken,' but held up its lamp across the gloom. Her true love was the fixed star of his wandering bark, that shone when the sun went down; this was his glory in disgrace; his fount of healing when wounded by the world, or his own self-inflicted injuries; the bright, still blessedness that touched his troubled thoughts; his resting-place, where the Poet hoped he would at last find peace, and hear in his household love, the murmurs of a dearer music than any he could make in a sonneteering strain.

There is in this sonnet one of those instances of Shakspeare's mode of vivifying by means of an image, which are a never-ending surprise to his readers. But it takes

all its life from the love-story now unfolded. It is the astronomical allusion to Elizabeth Vernon as the star whose worth was unknown although its height was measured — meaning that there yet remained the unexplored world of wedded love; the undiscovered riches of the wedded life. Although the distance between them had been taken, the best could not be known until he has made that star his dwelling-place and home of love; knows its hidden worth as well as he knew its brightness and its faithfulness as a guiding light in the distance.

The Queen's opposition to the marriage of Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon is apparent all through these sonnets devoted to them. The burden of the whole story is an opposition which has to be borne awhile. This is figured as the spite of Fortune and the tyranny of Time. In sonnet 36 (p. 176) the spite begins by separating the two lovers, and stealing sweet hours from love's delight; this enforced parting is the first shape taken by Time's tyranny. In his absence the lover speaks of his mistress as his locked-up treasure kept by Time. Sonnet 70 (p. 226) recognises how much the Earl is tried by this waiting imposed upon him by Time. Moreover, the promises of immortality are expressly made to right this wrong of Time. Against all the powers of Time and 'Death and all-oblivious *Enmity*' shall he 'pace forth,' wearing an eternal crown which he has won by his steadfastness in love. And in this marriage sonnet the true love is crowned by the Poet because it has not been the fool or slave of Time; has not given in to the adverse circumstances, or succumbed to the opposition, but 'borne it out even to the edge of doom.'

PERSONAL SONNETS.

1599—1600.

SHAKSPEARE TO THE EARL, CHIEFLY ON HIS OWN DEATH.

THIS is a group of very touching sonnets. Nowhere else shall we draw more near to the poet in his own person. They look as if written in contemplation of death. They have a touch of physical languor: the tinge of solemn thought. And if they were composed at such a time, they show us how limitedly autobiographic the sonnets were intended to be. Shakspeare never speaks of himself except in relation to the Earl. Here his request is that, should he die, his friend is not to mourn for him any longer even than the death-bell tolls. He would rather be forgotten by the Earl than that his friend should grieve for him when he is gone. Also, he begs that the Earl will not so much as mention his name, lest the keen hard world should see the disparity betwixt what the friend in his kindness may have thought of the Poet and its own shrewder estimate; for if the world should task the living to tell what merit there was in him that is dead, the Earl will be put to shame, or be driven to speak falsely of one whom he loved truly.

The third sonnet appears to me to have in it more of

illness than of age. The Poet is urging excuses; and, in case he should die, he is making the best of it for his friend. Then he is decrying his own appearance as one that sees himself in the glass when worn and broken by suffering. He feels his life to be in the sere and yellow leaf. The boughs are growing bare where the sweet birds lately sang. The twilight is creeping over all, cold and grey. The fire that he has warmed himself by is sinking low; there is more white ash than ruddy glow. All this he urges in case the flame should go out suddenly. The sonnet concludes with another excuse. Because this is so, and the Earl sees it, that is why his love grows stronger, fearing lest it should lose him. 'But do not mind,' he says, 'though I should die, yet shall I be with you; I shall live on in the lines which I leave; these shall stay with you as a memorial of our love. When you look at these sonnets, you will see the very part of me that was consecrated to you. Earth can but take its own as food for the worms. My spirit is yours, and that remains with you.' 'Against the time shall come,' he continues, 'when my friend shall be, as I am now, bowed down and crushed by "Time's injurious hand," when the blood runs thin, and the brow is as a map filled with the lines and crosses of care; his day is approaching "age's steepy night," and his beauty is vanishing—against such a time as this have I written these sonnets, (which are to remain with him), so that when he dies his beauty may live on in enduring youth.' 'Either I shall live to write your epitaph, or you will survive long after me; be this as it may, Death shall not take hence the memory of you, although I shall be quite forgotten. Your name shall have immortal life from these lines, although I, once gone, shall be gone for ever. The earth will yield me but a common grave; your grave shall be in the eyes of men, and my verse shall build your gentle monument.'

I am by no means sure that the first two lines of the

5th sonnet do not indicate more than age or illness. When we consider Shakspeare's reticence on the subject of self, they look particularly pointed for a passing allusion. Time is not used for age in these two lines; that follows in the next line; these contain their own particulars. The Poet is *crushed* and *overworn* by Time's *injurious* hand. Here is the same personification of Time, the ruling tyrant, as we find in the sonnets spoken by Southampton. It is time present, not time in general. Then 'injurious' is an appellation of reproach, meaning that from the present time, or at the present moment, Shakspeare is suffering some wrong which is unjustly hurtful. Time's hand is here *injurious* in a moral rather than physical sense. And this wrong, whether of detraction or persecution, he feels to be so great, that he is quite '*crushed and overworn.*' Steevens remarked of this expression, that to say first he was *crushed* and then *overworn*, was little better than to say of a man that he was first killed and then wounded. But it is perfectly right, and much like the Poet's inclusive way of speaking, if he felt crushed in the moral sense, as well as worn down in physical health. And that there was such an accumulation of affliction is shown by the emphatic '*As I am now!*' What was this heavy injustice which so bowed the Poet's spirit at the time, and caused the nearest approach to a personal cry in the whole of the sonnets? As the sonnet is addressed to Southampton, the subject will be one that he is cognisant of, and in which he is interested, or even this little allusion to himself would hardly have been permitted by the Poet. It may have to do with Shakspeare's having fallen under the suspicion of those in authority, possibly of Majesty itself, on account of Southampton's friendly intimacy and his appearance of being bound up with the cause of Essex. Had he not said something very flattering of the Earl in his Henry V.? This may have been reported to the injury of the Poet, and resented by Her

Majesty. It was something very important, or it would not have been chronicled in a personal sonnet.

No longer mourn for me, when I am dead,
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
Give warning to the world that I am fled
From this vile world with vilest worms to dwell:
Nay, if you read this line remember not
The hand that writ it; for I love you so
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
If thinking on me then should make you woe:
O if—I say—you look upon this verse
When I perhaps compounded am with clay,[1]
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,
But let your love even with my life decay:
Lest the wise world should look into your moan,
And mock you with me after I am gone.

(71.)

O, lest the World should task you to recite
What merit lived in me, that you should love
After my death, dear Love, forget me quite,
For you in me can nothing worthy prove;
Unless you would devise some virtuous lie,
To do more for me than mine own desert,
And hang more praise upon deceaséd I
Than niggard truth would willingly impart:
O lest your true love may seem false in this,
That you for love speak well of me untrue,
My name be buried where my body is,
And live no more to shame nor me nor you!
For I am shamed by that which I bring forth,
And so should you, to love things nothing worth.

(72.)

That time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang!
In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,

[1] So 'Hamlet,' when asked what he has done with the dead body of Polonius, replies, 'Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.'

Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest!
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by:
This thou perceiv'st, which mak'st thy love more strong
To love that well which thou must lose ere long.
(73.)

But be contented! when that fell arrest
Without all bail shall carry me away,
My life hath in this line some interest,
Which for memorial still with thee shall stay:
When thou reviewest this, thou dost review
The very part was consecrate to thee:
The Earth can have but earth, which is his due;
My spirit is thine, the better part of me!
So then thou hast but lost the dregs of life,
The prey of worms—my body being dead—
The coward-conquest of a wretch's knife,
Too base of thee to be remembered:
The worth of that is that which it contains,
And that is this, and this with thee remains.
(74.)

Against my Love shall be, as I am now,
With Time's injurious hand crushed and o'erworn;
When hours have drained his blood and filled his brow
With lines and wrinkles; when his youthful morn
Hath travelled on to Age's steepy night,
And all those beauties whereof now he's king,
Are vanishing or vanished out of sight,
Stealing away the treasure of his Spring;
For such a time do I now fortify
Against confounding Age's cruel knife,
That he shall never cut from memory
My sweet Love's beauty, tho' my Lover's life:
His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
And they shall live, and he in them still green.
(63.)

Or I shall live your Epitaph to make,
Or you survive when I in earth am rotten;
From hence your memory Death cannot take,
Altho' in me each part will be forgotten:
Your name from hence immortal life shall have,
Tho' I, once gone, to all the world must die:
The earth can yield me but a common grave,
When you entombéd in men's eyes shall lie:
Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read;
And tongues to be your being shall rehearse,
When all the breathers of this world are dead;
You still shall live—such virtue hath my Pen—
Where breath most breathes—even in the mouths of men. (81.)

Thus the Poet speaks of his own death and the death of his friend, with a soul brimful of tender love as the summer dew-drop is of morning sun. No image of disgrace darkens the retrospect of life; all is purity and peace. The sonnets treasure up his better part, and they are to 'blossom in the dust' with a breath of sweetness and memorial fragrance, when he lies in the ground. Here also is proof, I think, that he did not contemplate *being known to the world as the writer of these sonnets* when he composed this group. The work was a cherished love-secret on his part, all the dearer for the privacy. He thought of doing it, and he believed it would live, and that his friend and all the love between them should live on in it, but *he himself was to steal off unidentified.* In the last sonnet, he says:—

'Your name from hence immortal life shall have,
Tho' I, *once gone, to all the world must die*:
The earth can yield me *but a common grave,*
When you entombéd in men's eyes shall lie,
Your monument shall be my gentle verse.'

Clearly the sonnets were to be *nameless*, so far as the author was concerned, or Shakspeare must have been a

sharer with his friend in both the immortal life and monument! Again, he says, when he is dead—

> 'Do not so much as my poor *name* rehearse,
> My *name* be buried where my body is.'

And in Sonnet 76 (p. 254), there is a kind of 'hush!' He speaks of his friend so plainly, that 'every word doth almost tell *my* name,' and from whom the Sonnets proceeded, as if that were self-forbidden. He assures his friend of immortality, he speaks of having an interest in the verses, for they contain the 'better part' of himself consecrated to his friend, but he does not contemplate living in them by name.

These sonnets have the authority of parting words, and that in a double sense; for not only are they written when Shakspeare was ill, as I understand him, but they are written when he fancied the Southampton series was just upon finished. How, then, was the immortality to be conferred? How was the monument erected by Shakspeare to be known as the Earl of Southampton's? How were the many proud boasts to be fulfilled? In this way I imagine. Sidney had called his prose work 'The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia,' and in all likelihood, when these sonnets were written, it was Shakspeare's intention, if they ever were published, to print them as the Earl of Southampton's. The fact of his having written in the Earl's name points to such a conclusion. This view serves to explain how it was that the Poet could care so little for fame; seem so unconscious of the value of his own work, and yet make so many proud boasts of immortality. It is whilst fighting for his friend that we have this escape of consciousness, if it amounts to that, not whilst speaking of himself, nor whilst contemplating living by name, and the sonnets are to be immortal because they are the Earl of Southampton's, rather than on account of their being William Shakspeare's.

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

1601—1603.

SOUTHAMPTON, IN THE TOWER, TO HIS COUNTESS.

ALSO

SHAKSPEARE TO THE EARL IN PRISON, AND UPON HIS RELEASE.

THIS is the story of the next group of sonnets:—The Earl of Southampton was, as is well known, tried for treason, along with the Earl of Essex, and condemned to die. His share in the wild attempt at rebellion was undoubtedly owing to his kinship, and to his friendship for the Earl. His youth, his friends, pleaded for him, and his life was spared. He was respited during the Queen's pleasure, after having been left for some weeks under sentence of execution. The sentence being at length commuted, he was kept a close prisoner until her Majesty's death. These three sonnets give us a dramatic representation of the situation. They are spoken by the Earl to his Countess; and they illustrate the facts and circumstances of the time with the most literal exactness, the utmost truth of detail. The Earl is in the Tower, and the shadow of the prison-house creeps darkly over the page as we read. The imprisonment is personified as Time. Time holds the Earl tightly in his grip. Time has the

speaker in his keeping for a while—is absolute master for the moment. This is a very perfect image of imprisonment. But, safely as Time holds him, surely as he has got him, the Earl defies Time still, and says, in spite of this newest, latest, strongest proof of his power, Time shall not boast that he changes. He will still be true to his love. 'Thy *pyramids* built up with *newer might*, to me are nothing novel, nothing strange!' That is, this latest proof of Time's power—he has had many in the course of his love—shall not impose on him in spite of its new shape and its arguments drawn from remote antiquity.

'Thy *pyramids*'—the various towers of which the Tower is composed—'*built-up* anew over my head, with this display of might which has shut me up within them, are only a former sight freshly dressed: I recognise my old foe in a novel mask. You are my old enemy, Time, the tyrant! You have given me many a shrewd fall; you have chafed my spirit sorely; but I still defy your worst. In vain you hold me as in a chamber of torture, and show me the works you have done, the ruin you have wrought. In vain you point with lean finger to all these emblems of mortality and proofs of change, and foist upon me these signs of age. I see the place is rich in *Records* of times past, and the *Registers* of bygone things. I know *our* dates are brief compared with these of yours, but your shows and shadows do not intimidate me; they will not make my spirit quail. I shall not waver or change in my love, however long my imprisonment may last. I defy both yourself and your taunts of triumph. I am not the slave of Time, and it is useless to show me your dates. I wonder neither at the present nor the past. I stand with a firm foot on that which is eternal, and can look calmly on these dissolving views of time. Whatsoever you may cut down, I shall be true, despite thy scythe and thee!' Thus the Earl meditates, shut up in the Tower of London,

the grey gloom and ghostly atmosphere of which may be felt in the first sonnet. The reader will perceive how perfect is this interior of the prison-house—this garner of Time's gleanings—if it be remembered that the Tower was then the great depository of the public *Records* and national *Registers*; the Statute Rolls, Patent Rolls, Parliament Rolls, Bulls, Pardons, Ordinances, Grants, Privy Seals, and antique Charters, dating back to the time of William the Norman. In no place could Time look more imposing and venerable, or be dressed with a greater show of authority, than in the old Tower, standing up grey against the sky; full of strange human relics, and guilty secrets, and awful memories, and the dust of some who are noblest, some who are vilest among our England's dead.

The Poet makes only a stroke or two—the 'pyramids' or turrets without; the 'Registers,' 'Records,' and ancient dates within; but there we have the Tower, and no picture could possess more truth of local hoary colour.

It will give an added force to the speaker's tone of defiance if we remember what a grim reality the Tower was in those days, and what a lively terror to the Elizabethan imagination. A personification of living death!

The meditation of the next sonnet is very express. The Earl had endeavoured to marry Elizabeth Vernon for some years before he succeeded. He was compelled to marry her secretly at last. And in this sonnet he rejoices that they were married before his imprisonment occurred. If, he says, he had not effected his purpose in spite of the Queen, and his beloved were now unmarried to him, if his 'love' had remained merely the 'child of state,' the creature of a Court, subject to its policy or the Queen's intention, it would, now he is taken away, have been the veriest bastard of Fortune—a child without a father. If we bear in mind the condition of Elizabeth Vernon previous to the stolen marriage, we shall see the dual meaning of this illustration! Had it been so, he

says, it would have continued subject to Time's love or hate, and might have fallen under his scythe in the most hap-hazard way; a flower amongst flowers, or a weed among weeds, just as chance might have determined. But no, he has secured it from scorn and insult. He has built beyond the reach of accident. His beloved may be out in the world alone, but she wears the name of wife—nay, she is gathered up into his bosom by that grand inclusive way in which the sonnet personifies the 'love' in its oneness. 'It was builded far from accident'—the marriage made that sure! and now, as things are, it 'suffers not' in the falsely '*smiling pomp*' of Court favour; is not compelled to seek Court preferment, is no more exposed to the changeful weather, the sun and shower of royal caprice; nor does it fall under—cannot come within reach of—that 'blow of thralled discontent' to which the 'inviting time' calls 'our fashion'; the young nobles, England's chivalry, who at that moment were being summoned to the aid of Mountjoy in Ireland.

No apter image of Ireland in the year 1601 could be conceived than this '*thralled discontent*' gives us.

Camden says the affairs of that country were in a 'leaning posture,' tending to a 'dejection,' and the Spaniard seized the occasion to make one more push, and if possible, topple over English rule in Ireland. It was proclaimed that Elizabeth was, by several censures of the Bishop of Rome, deprived of her crown. The spirit of rebellion sprang up full-statured at the promise of help from Spain; and 'thralled discontent' once more welcomed the deliverer. Rumour came flying in all haste, and babbling with all her tongues. It was an 'inviting time' indeed to the young gallants—the Earl's old comrades—who were fast taking horse and ship once more. The prose parallel to the sonnet will be found in a letter to Mr. Winwood from Mr. Secretary Cecil, Oct. 4, 1601[1] He

[1] *Winwood's Memorials*, vol. i. p. 351.

writes, 'on the 25th of last month there landed between five and six thousand Spaniards in the province of Munster, commanded by Don Juan d'Aguila, who was general of the Spanish army at Bluett. The Lord Deputy (Mountjoy) is hasting, with the best power he can make, and her Majesty is sending over six thousand men, with all things thereto belonging, which, being added to eighteen thousand already in that kingdom, you must think do put this realm to a wanton charge.' Of course the sonnet does not make the Earl exult that he cannot follow to join his old friends in the two campaigns which ended in Mountjoy's leading captive the rebel Tyrone to the feet of Elizabeth. That would have been undramatic, unnatural. He only says that, shut up in prison as he is, *his love does not 'fall under the blow'* whereto the time calls *so invitingly*. It has no fear of policy, that heretic in love and love-matters! which, after all—and here is an ominous hint, perhaps of the Queen's age—works on a short lease, or a lease of *short-numbered* hours. No! it stands *all alone*—completely isolated from the strokes and shocks of time and change in the outer world. He sits at the centre of the wild whirl—or rather he is just where things stand still—and 'hugely politic,' it is too! His love 'nor grows with heat, nor drowns with showers' of the Court world. But it has an inward life of its own; is firm as the centre; steadfast and true to the end. To the truth of his assertions he calls his witnesses, and weird witnesses they are; for, being where the speaker is, we get a glimpse of Tower Hill through the window bars, and see the solemn procession; the sawdusted stage with its black velvet drapery of death; the headsman in his black mask, his axe in his hand, and all the scenery and circumstance of that grim way they had of going up to God. The speaker calls for witnesses, the spirits of those political plotters, whose heads fell from the block, and whose bodies moulder within the old walls. The 'fools' who had been

the sport of the time, he calls them, who lived to commit crime, but died nobly at last—made a pious end, as we say.

Shakspeare had evidently remarked that, as a rule, those who were condemned to die on the scaffold died 'good,' no matter what the life had been: it was the custom for them to make an edifying end. Stowe relates how Sir Charles Danvers mounted the scaffold and 'put off his gown and doublet in a most cheerful manner, rather like a bridegroom than a prisoner appointed for death, and he then prayed very devoutly.' The allusion is no doubt more particularly directed to Essex and his companions, who had died so recently; Essex having been executed on the inner hill of the Tower. The 'fools of time' may give us the Poet's estimate of Essex's attempt. He was one of those who had lived to reach the criminal's end, but who 'died for goodness' in the sense that he, like Danvers, died devoutly, and took leave of life with a redeeming touch of nobleness. But the manner of the death is still more obviously aimed at—the dying in public, lifted up for the view of the gaping crowd, and making sport for the time, by giving a bloody zest to a popular holiday.

The next sonnet still carries on the idea of imprisonment, and the external image of bearing the canopy is in opposition to his present limitation in the Tower. Confined as he is, and limited to so narrow a space for living, he asks, were it anything to him if he bore the whole canopy of the heavens outside, 'honouring the outward' with his externals, filled the world with the fame of his doings, made the heavens, as it were, his arch of triumph, or 'laid great bases for eternity,' as some do, and prove them to be 'more short than waste or ruining?' Has he not seen how it went with many who sought Court favour and fickle fortune—Essex, for example—the 'dwellers on form and favour'—has he not seen how they lost all, and more—this life, perhaps next—by paying down their very souls for glittering need-nots; foregoing all the simple

savour of life for a 'compound sweet,' adulterated with poison?

These are the words of one standing apart, thrust aside, who can now watch how the game goes, with its tricks and intrigues; its fervours and failures. He can see how much reality the players forego for the sake of their illusions; see what they trample under foot in their visionary pursuit, and how they stumble into the ditch, with foolish eyes fixed on their stars! The *pitiful thrivers* in their gazing spent! No. He is ambitious for none of these things. Let his beloved but accept the humble offerings of his love, he cares for no other success. His love for her is mixed with no secondary ambition. Cooped up as he is, thrust out of service, he has all if he have her safely folded up in his heart: she is his all-in-all, and he asks for a 'mutual render, only me for thee!' The sonnet ends with a defiance which, I think, clenches my conclusion. Camden tells us that amongst the confederates of Essex, one of them, whilst in prison, turned informer, and revealed what had taken place at the meetings held in the Earl of Southampton's house, though he, the historian, could never learn who it was. In the last two lines of the sonnet, the Earl flings his disdain at the '*suborned Informer*,' and comparing himself with so base a knave, he feels that he is truer than such a fellow, although the world calls him a traitor; and when most *impeached* (for treason), he is least in *such* a loyalist's control. The difference betwixt their two natures is so vast, not to be bridged in life or death. We have only to remember how recently the Earl of Southampton had been *impeached* as a traitor, and those two lines must speak to us with the power of his living voice! He concludes his prison-thoughts by hurling his defiance at the man whose treachery led to this imprisonment.

THE EARL IN PRISON ADDRESSES ELIZABETH VERNON, NOW LADY SOUTHAMPTON.

No; Time, thou shall not boast that I do change!
Thy pyramids, built up with newer might,
To me are nothing novel—nothing strange—
They are but dressings of a former sight:
Our dates are brief, and therefore we admire
What thou dost foist upon us that is old,
And rather make them born to our desire
Than think that we before have heard them told:
Thy Registers and thee I both defy,
Not wondering at the present, nor the past,
For thy Records and what we see doth lie,
Made more or less by thy continual haste!
This I do vow, and this shall ever be,
I will be true despite thy scythe and thee.

(123.)

If my dear love were but the child of State,
It might for Fortune's bastard[1] be unfathered
As subject to Time's love, or to Time's hate;
Weeds among weeds, or flowers with flowers gathered:
No, it was builded far from accident!
It suffers not in smiling pomp,[2] nor falls
Under the blow of thralled Discontent,
Whereto the inviting time our Fashion calls:

[1] '*Fortune's Bastard*,' in the sense of being nameless; an illegitimate child having no name by inheritance. The Poet speaks of 'nameless bastardy' in 'Lucreece,' and in the 'Two Gentlemen of Verona,' 'That's as much as to say *bastard* virtues, that indeed know not their father's name, and therefore have no name.' If the Earl's 'love' had only been the child of State, the marriage would not have taken place at all, and it would now have been a nameless bastard of Fortune. And, as such, his love would have remained subject to 'Time's love or to Time's hate,' as it was before his marriage.

[2] It suffers not in the *smiling pomp* of the Court at home, nor falls under the blow of rebellion abroad. So the Duke in 'As You Like It,' speaks of his court life as a life of '*painted pomp*.' Also Anne Bullen, in 'Henry VIII.,' says of Queen Katherine, 'Much better she ne'er had known *pomp*,' meaning royalty and its immediate surroundings. 'See Cæsar! O, behold how *pomp* is followed,' exclaims Cleopatra; and Lear cries, 'Take physic, *pomp*!'

It fears not Policy[1]—that Heretic
Which works on leases of short-numbered hours—
But all alone stands hugely politic,
That it nor grows with heat, nor drowns with showers:[2]
To this I witness call the fools of Time
Which die for goodness who have lived for crime.

(124.)

Were it ought to me I bore the canopy,
With my extern the outward honouring?
Or laid great bases for eternity,
Which prove more short than waste or ruining?
Have I not seen dwellers on form and favour
Lose all and more by paying too much rent?
For compound sweet foregoing simple savor;
Pitiful thrivers in their gazing spent!
No! let me be obsequious in thy heart,[3]
And take thou my oblation, poor but free,

[1] '*It fears not policy.*' It had been the Queen's *policy*, pursued for years, to prevent the marriage of Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon.

[2] 'That it nor *grows* with heat nor drowns with showers.'

Steevens's comment on this line is, 'Though a *building* may be *drowned*, i.e. deluged with rain, it can hardly *grow* under the influence of *heat*. I would read *glows*.' The Earl was not speaking of a building, but of his 'dear love,' which had been builded or cemented by his marriage. So, in 'Antony and Cleopatra, 'the cement of our love, to keep it builded.' He did not mean that his love had become a building. We speak of the bees building their cells, and of the comb growing in size, but we do not call the honey a building. The building up of love is a favourite expression of Shakspeare's:

'And ruined love, when it is *built* anew,
Grows fairer than at first.'—*Sonnet* 119.

'Shall *love* in *building* grow so ruinate.'
Two Gentlemen of Verona.

'But the strong *base* and *building* of my love
Is as the very centre to the earth.'—*Troilus and Cressida.*

The obtuseness and impertinence of this critic are at times insufferable. To see him in Shakspeare's company at all causes a general sense of uncomfortableness, such as Launce may have felt respecting the manners of his dog Crab.

[3] So Falstaff to Mrs. Ford, in the 'Merry Wives,' 'I see you are obsequious in your love.'

Which is not mix'd with seconds,[1] knows no art,
But mutual render, only me for thee!
Hence, thou suborned Informer, a true soul
When most impeached stands least in thy control!
(125.)

Shakspeare might have been the speaker in the three foregoing sonnets without any conflict with some of the historic circumstances to which they refer—such as the Earl's imprisonment and the Irish war. But had he been the speaker in those sonnets which confess a changing, ranging, false and fickle spirit, that had so often and so sadly tried the person addressed, he could scarcely have been as heroic in asserting his unswerving steadfastness of affection, and hurled at Time his defiant determination to be eternally true. Time might not 'boast,' but Shakspeare would be boasting with huge swagger at a most sorrowful unseasonable period. He might fairly enough defy Time, and all State-policy, to alienate him from his friend. But his 'dear love,' his friendship, was not the 'child of State' in any shape, therefore he could not speak of its being *only* the 'child of State.' Shakspeare generally uses State in the most regal sense. Hamlet the Prince was the first hope and foremost flower of the *State*. So, in 'King Henry VIII.,' we have 'an old man broken by the storms of *State*.' Nor was State-policy likely to be exerted for any such purpose in his case. He might, as most probably he did, have visited the Earl in the Tower, and there moralized on the doings of Time, and told him, to his face, he was an old impostor, after all, who tried to play tricks with appearances on those who were close prisoners there in his keeping. But his 'love' could not be an 'unfathered bastard of Fortune' in consequence of being *only* the 'Child of State.' It could not have

[1] *Mix'd with seconds.*' So in 'King Lear,' 'No seconds? all myself?' Act iv. sc. 6.

been builded far from 'accident' when so terrible a one had just occurred to the Earl. He might have been inwardly glad that his friend could not get away to the Irish wars, and within range of the impending blow of 'thralled Discontent.' But he could not have congratulated the Earl on his imprisonment being the cause why the friendship did not come under that blow. It will be observed that there is a self-gratulatory tone in the sonnets. Nor could *his* love, his friendship have suffered in 'smiling pomp;' and if it might, it was not for Shakspeare to say such a thing to his fettered friend, doomed to a life-long imprisonment. Nor could he, by his own showing, have said that his love feared not Policy, the Heretic, for in the 107th sonnet he tells us how much he had feared. He was filled with fears for the Earl in prison, and trembled for the life supposed to be forfeited to a 'confined doom.' Clearly, then, he could not be thus loftily defiant of the worst that had happened, or could happen, on behalf of another, and that other his dear friend who was sitting in the very shadow of death! The defiance and the boasts would have been altogether unnatural from Shakspeare's mouth. How could *his* love stand 'all alone' and be 'hugely politic?' One would have thought, too, that *his* love would have been ready enough to 'drown with showers,' had he been speaking of his beloved friend in such perilous circumstances. Moreover, it would be exceedingly strange for Shakspeare to call the 'fools of Time' as his witnesses. What for? Save to show what a fool he was in making such a singular declaration of his enduring love. He could have made no such vast and vague a public appeal to prove the truth of his private affection. Then, with the Earl bound hand and foot and in great mental agony, as he must have been, is it to be supposed that Shakspeare would fix his gaze on himself and his own limiting circumstances? 'Were it ought to me I bore the canopy.' Why, what would it be to his friend, the Earl? Such

reference to himself—such a 'look at me' would have been the veriest mockery to his poor friend; such a discourse on the benefits of being without a tail would have been a vulgar insult. If Shakspeare were speaking thus of himself, the reader's concern would be for Southampton! But enough said: it is not Shakspeare who speaks in these sonnets. It is the same speaker who has so long sustained the fight with 'Time' and 'Fortune,' which have overthrown him at last, although when prostrate on the ground, he will not yield. The speaker, who, in sonnet 29 (p. 166), feels himself to be in 'disgrace with Fortune,' and men's eyes are turned from him. In sonnet 37 (p. 168) he is made lame, is disabled, or shut out of service, by Fortune's 'dearest' or most excessive spite. In sonnet 90 (p. 246), the same person is still pursued by the malice of Fortune, which is bent on crossing his deeds. It is the same speaker, the unlucky scapegrace, the noble 'ne'er-do-weel,' who, in sonnet 111 (p. 270), asks his much-suffering, more-loving friend to chide this 'Fortune' that has been to so great an extent the guilty goddess, the cause of his harmful doings and his 'blenches,' or starts from rectitude. It is the same person on whose behalf Shakspeare makes such a prolonged fight with Time and evil Fortune, and in some of the personal sonnets speaks so proudly of the power of his verse to give him an immortality to right this wrong of time. At first sight a reader might fancy some of those sonnets to have been written after a visit to the Tavern, when the canary had added a cubit to the Poet's stature, and he talked loftily for so modest a man. But he had a stronger incentive; a wilder wine was awork within him when he made these sounding promises of immortality. Not flattery nor the spirit of the grape were his inspiration, but a passionate feeling of injustice and wrong, and a determination to make his 'love' triumph over time and enmity, and all the opposition of a malevolent fortune. This is

the man who speaks in the foregoing sonnets, and it will be seen that the personal theory has not the shadow of a chance when compared with the dramatic one. It cannot gauge these sonnets; does not go to the bottom in any one of the deeper places. The dramatic version, with Southampton for speaker, alone will sound the depths, and make out the sense. It penetrates, informs, and illumines the dimmest nook with a light that we can see by, whereas the personal rendering, in all its explorations, only leads us into the middle of a maze, and there leaves us in the dark.

If we would listen to the words of Shakspeare himself speaking to the Earl of Southampton in prison, we shall hear him in the 115th sonnet:—

SHAKSPEARE TO THE EARL IN PRISON.

Those lines that I before have writ do lie;
Even those that said I could not love you dearer!
Yet then my judgment knew no reason why
My most full flame should afterwards burn clearer!
But reckoning time, whose million'd accidents
Creep in 'twixt vows, and change decrees of kings,
Tan sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,
Divert strong minds to the course of altering things;
Alas! why, fearing of Time's tyranny,
Might I not then say, 'Now I love you best?'
When I was certain o'er incertainty,
Crowning the present, doubting of the rest?
Love is a babe; then might I not say so,
To give full growth to that which still doth grow.
(115.)

These lines tell us that Shakspeare had before said he loved his friend so much it was impossible for him to love the Earl more dearly. Because, at the time of saying so, he could neither see nor foresee reason why that flame of his love should afterwards burn clearer, or soar up more strongly. But this new and more perilous position

of his friend serves to make him pour forth his love in a larger measure, and he now sees why he ought not to have said he could not love him more. The shadow has fallen on his friend; the waters of affliction have gone over him, and he loves him more than ever in his latest calamity. He feels that he ought not to have boasted of his love even when he felt most certain over uncertainty, because the Earl has been so marked a victim of 'Time's tyranny.' Even when the present was crowned in the Earl's marriage, he ought still to have doubted of the rest, and not made any such assertion. The lines have an appearance of Shakspeare's taking up the pen once more after he had looked upon the expression of his affection in sonnets as finished when he celebrated the marriage of Southampton. Now he has found a fresh cause for speaking of that love, to which a stronger appeal has been made. The reason, as here stated, 'love is a babe,' sounds somewhat puerile, but it is the Poet's way of making light of himself; the personal sonnet being sent merely in attendance on the three dramatic ones, which were the messengers of importance, whilst this was only their servant. It is a part of my theory that Shakspeare did not mean to write passionate personal sonnets, and that the dramatic method was adopted partly for the suppression of himself. He does not seek to make the most of this occasion, and give adequate expression to such feelings as he must have had when the Earl was condemned to die. His friend in relation to his Countess, not himself, was his object. Thus, while he makes many of his personal sonnets into pretty patterns of ingenious thought, the others are all aglow with dramatic fire and feeling, only to be fully felt when we have learned who the speakers are. Here his own warmth of heart is suppressed, to be put into cordial loving words, for the forlorn and desolate wife of his dear friend.

It is one of Boaden's arguments that these sonnets cannot

have been addressed to the Earl of Southampton, because the Poet has not written in the direct personal way on the passing events of the Earl's life. He asks, with a taunt, how did the Poet feel upon the rash daring of Essex? Had he no soothing balm to shed upon the agonies of his trial, his sentence, his imprisonment, bitter as death? Could his eulogist find no call upon him for *secure congratulation* when James had restored him to liberty? 'We should expect Shakspeare to tell him, in a masterly tone, that calamity was the nurse of great spirits; that his afflictions had been the source of his fame; that mankind never could have known the resources of his mighty mind, if he had not been summoned to endure disgrace, and to gaze undauntedly on death itself.' Here, however, the critic has only copied Daniel. These are that Poet's sentiments expressed in the direct personal way. Shakspeare being a great Dramatic Poet, and a close personal friend of the Earl, wrote in his own way, or according to that friend's wish, expressed years before. It did not suit him, nor the plan of his work, to wail and weep personally. Was he not the man of men, who always kept himself out of sight? And is not the closest touch of hearts where none can see? It suited all the persons concerned that he should use the Earl's name, and try to infuse into the Earl's nature something of his own impassioned majesty of soul, so that the Earl might unconsciously feel strengthened in Shakspeare's strength, and be able to look on life through his eyes who saw with so lustrous a clearness. Thus, the Poet could instruct his friend, and stand over him as an invisible teacher, when the Earl only saw the writer of sonnets labouring for his amusement; and to us he speaks over the shoulder of his friend. This was Shakspeare's dramatic way with all whom he has taught—all whom he yet teaches.

There are, however, some important allusions in this sonnet! The reference to Time changing 'DECREES OF KINGS' no doubt includes the change in that decree

which had doomed the Earl to death. And I think the attempt of Essex to create a revolution, or some great change, is unmistakeably meant in the line that speaks of Time diverting 'strong minds to *the course of altering things*!' If so, it also shows something of the amazement with which Shakspeare had witnessed so futile a diversion on the part of a *strong*—possibly he thought head-strong—mind to the course of altering things that were so firmly fixed. He looks upon the futile, foolish assault as a mental aberration, and one of the accidents—not to say wonders—of Time! This line is one of those personal and precious particulars with which the sonnets abound, and for which all the rest were written. They are too solid to be dissipated into that vapour of vague generalities which some of the interpreters so much delight in, but in which thin air the rich poetic life of Shakspeare could not have breathed.

Sonnet 107 will show us that, in spite of the dramatic method adopted by Shakspeare in writing of the Earl, *he did find a call for secure congratulation when James had restored the Earl to his liberty.*

SHAKSPEARE'S GREETING TO THE EARL ON HIS RELEASE FROM THE TOWER.

Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,
Can yet the lease of my true love control,
Supposed as forfeit to a confined Doom![1]
The mortal Moon[2] hath her Eclipse endured,
And the sad Augurs mock their own presage;
Incertainties now crown themselves assured,
And Peace proclaims olives of endless age;[3]

[1] 'Confined doom,' i.e., a doom defined by boundaries. In 'King Lear' we have the 'confined deep.'

[2] '*Mortal Moon.*' The Queen is personified as the moon, cold and chaste, in the allegory of a 'Midsummer Night's Dream.' Our poet calls the eyes of his Lucrece '*mortal stars.*'

[3] 'When King James came to be King of England, the kingdom was in *entire*

Now with the drops of this most balmy time
My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,
Since spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,
While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes,
And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When Tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.[1]
(107.)

There can be no mistake, doubt, or misgiving here! This sonnet contains evidence beyond question—proof positive and unimpeachable—that the man addressed by Shakspeare in his *personal* sonnets has been condemned in the first instance to death, and afterwards to imprisonment for life, and escaped his doom through the death of the Queen.

It tells us that the Poet had been filled with fears for the fate of his friend, and that his instinct, as well as the presentiment of the world in general, had foreshadowed the worst for the Earl, as it dreamed on things to come. He sadly feared the life of his friend—the Poet's lease of his true love—was forfeited, if not to immediate death, to a 'confined doom,' or a definite, a life-long imprisonment. The painful uncertainty is over now. The Queen is dead—the '*Mortal Moon* hath her eclipse endured.'[2] Cynthia was one of Elizabeth's most popular poetical names.

peace within, and in martial state and full of honour and reputation abroad.' *A Detection of the Court and State of England*, by Roger Coke, vol. i. p. 29. Likewise Cranmer, in 'Henry VIII.,' points out the *peace* for James I., which is one of the assured blessings of Elizabeth's reign, 'Peace, Plenty, Love shall then be his, and like a vine grow to him.'

[1] This is the last of the Southampton Sonnets, as they have come to us. Shakspeare's warfare with Time and Fortune on his friend's behalf is ended; the victory is won, he has found peace at last. There is a final farewell touch in the concluding iteration of the immortality so often promised. The Earl shall have a monument in the sonnets now finished, when the Abbey tombs have crumbled into dust. When he wrote these last lines, the Poet could not have contemplated leaving the monument without a name. Hitherto, however, the Earl has only found a tomb.

[2] So Antony says of Cleopatra, 'Alack, our *terrene Moon* is now eclipsed.'

An image of maiden purity to her Majesty, in which some of the Wits also saw the symbol of changefulness. Change of moon brings change of weather, too! His love is refreshed by the drops of this most balmy time, the tears of joy; his lease of love is renewed. Those who had prophesied the worst can now laugh at their own fears and mock their unfulfilled predictions. The new King calls the Earl from a prison to a seat of honour. As Wilson words it, 'the Earl of Southampton, covered long with the ashes of great Essex his ruins, was sent for from the tower, and the King looked upon him with a smiling countenance.' 'Peace proclaims olives of endless age.' Our Poet evidently hopes that the Earl's life will share in this new dawn of gladness and promised peace of the nation. He can exult over death this time. It is his turn to triumph now. And his friend shall find a monument in his verse which shall exist when the crests of tyrants have crumbled and their brass-mounted tombs have passed from sight.

This sonnet is a pregnant instance of Shakspeare's twin-bearing thought, his inclusive way of writing, which could not have been appreciated in the sonnets hitherto, because they have never been 'made flesh' for us to grasp. The sonnet carries double. It blends the Poet's private feeling for his friend with the public fear for the death of the Queen. The 'Augurs' had contemplated that event with mournful forebodings, and prophesied changes and disasters. The natural fact, of which this mortal '*eclipse*' is the image, is illustrated in 'King Lear.' 'I am thinking, brother,' says Edmund, '*of a prediction I read the other day what should follow these eclipses.*' The prediction having been made by his father, Gloster; 'These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us,' &c. (act i. sc. ii.)

But it has passed over happily for the nation as joyfully for the Poet. Instead of his friend yielding to Death,

Death—surely in the death of the Queen?—'subscribes,' that is, submits to the speaker.

Shakspeare himself gives us a hint, in his dramatic way, that he was present at the trial of the Earl, for he has, in a well-known speech of Othello's, adopted the manner and almost the words with which Bacon opened his address on that memorable occasion:—'I speak not to simple men,' said Bacon, but to '*prudent*, *grave*, and *wise* peers.' And this is obviously echoed in Othello's 'Most *potent*, *grave*, and *reverend* signiors.' The manner of address and the rhythm of the words are the same; the emphasis has in it more likeness to personal character than to an accident. And we may be sure that our Poet was one of the first to greet his friend at the open door of his prison[1] with that welcoming smile of pure sunshine, all the sweeter for the sadness past, and press his hand with all his heart in the touch. In this sonnet we have his written gratulation of the Earl on his release. It proves his sympathy with him in misfortune, and it proves also that he had been writing about the Earl. For we cannot suppose 'this poor rhyme' to mean this single sonnet, but the series which this sonnet concluded.

It may be asked, did Shakspeare rejoice in the death of the Queen? I do not say that he did, in any personal sense. His exultation was for his friend's freedom. Had he summed up on the subject in a balance-sheet, as Chatterton did on the death of Lord Mayor Beckford, he would have been glad the Queen was dead, by the gain of Southampton. But I do think Shakspeare looked upon her as a tyrant in all marriage matters, and not without cause. Her Majesty appears not only to have made up her mind to remain single herself, when getting on

[1] We may likewise be sure that Shakspeare had Southampton's good word in securing the patronage of James, and the privilege accorded by Letters Patent to his own theatrical company, directly after the King had reached London.

for sixty, but also to prevent her maids from being married. What the Queen's treatment was of her maids that wished to marry, we may gather from the letter of Mr. Fenton to John Harington,[1] in which, speaking of the Lady Mary Howard, he tells us that the Queen will not let her be married, saying, 'I have made her my servant, and she will make herself my mistress,' which she shall not. Moreover, she 'must not entertain' her lover in any conversation, but shun his company, and be careful how she attires her person, not to attract my Lord the Earl. The story runs that the Lady Mary had a gorgeous velvet dress, sprinkled with gold and pearl. The Queen thought it richer than her own. One day she sent privately for the dress, put it on, and appeared wearing it before her ladies in waiting. It was too short for her Majesty, and looked exceedingly unsuited to her. She asked the ladies how they liked her new-fangled dress, and they had to get out of their difficulty as best they could. Then she asked Lady Mary if she did not think it was too short and unbecoming. The poor girl agreed with her Majesty that it was. Whereupon the Queen said if it was too short for her, it was too fine for the owner, and the dress was accordingly put out of sight. Sir J. Harington relates how the Queen, when in a pleasant mood, would ask the ladies around her chamber if they loved to think of marriage? The wisely-wary ones would discreetly conceal their liking in the matter. The simple ones would unwittingly rise at the bait, and were caught and cruelly dangling on the hook the moment after, at which her Majesty enjoyed fine sport. We might cite other instances in which the attendants congratulated themselves in the words of Mr. John Stanhope, who, in writing to Lord Talbot[2] on the subject of Essex's marriage, and the Queen's consequent fury, says, 'God be thanked, she does not strike all she threats!' Mr. Fenton

[1] Harington's *Nugæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. p. 233.
[2] *Lodge's Illustrations*, 1838, ii. 422.

tells us that her Majesty 'chides in small matters, in such wise as to make these fair maids often cry and bewail in piteous sort.' The fair Mrs. Bridges, the lady at Court with whom the Earl of Essex was said to be in love, is reported to have felt the weight of her Majesty's displeasure, not only in words of anger, but in double-fisted blows. Elizabeth Vernon appears to have been driven nearly to the verge of madness, and a good deal of Southampton's trouble arose from the Queen's persistent opposition to their marriage. Some recent writers seem to think that there ought to have been neither marrying nor giving in marriage, if such was her Majesty's virgin pleasure. Shakspeare did not think so; he looked on life in a more natural light. It was his most cherished wish to get the earl married, and the Queen had been implacable in thwarting it; this made them take opposite sides. I like to find the Poet standing by the side of his friend, even though he speaks bitterly of the Queen as a 'heretic' to love, does not express one word of sorrow when the 'mortal moon' suffers final eclipse, and lets fly his last arrow in the air over the old Abbey where the royal tyrants lie low, with a twang on the bow-string unmistakeably vengeful.

We know that the poet was reproached for his silence on the death of the Queen. In Chettle's 'Englande's Mourning Garment' (1603), he is taken to task under the name of 'Melicert.'

> 'Nor doth the silver-tongéd Melicert
> Drop from his honied Muse one sable teare
> To mourn her death *that gracéd his desert,*
> *And to his laies opened her royall eare.*
> Shepheard, remember our Elizabeth,
> And sing her rape done by that Tarquin, Death.'

But the shepherd had his own private reasons for being deaf and dumb; he remembered another Elizabeth.

THE

MSS. BOOK OF THE SOUTHAMPTON SONNETS.

If the reader will refer back to sonnet 77 (p. 241), and study it awhile, he will see how a large number of the sonnets were written for Southampton. Hitherto the commentators have assumed that Shakspeare's friend had presented him with a table-book! But the sonnet is not composed either on receiving or making a gift; no such *motive* or stand-point can possibly be found in it. The subject is the old one of warring against Time, and the writer is at the moment writing in a book from which he draws one of a series of reflections in illustration of his thought. The mirror, he says, will tell the Earl how his 'beauties wear;' and the dial will show him Time's stealthy progress to eternity. '*This* book' will also teach its lesson. Its vacant leaves will take the mind's imprint; and he advises his friend to write down his own thoughts in these '*waste blanks*,' and they will be a living memory of the past, one day—just as the mirror is a reflector to-day. If he will do this, the habit—'these offices'—will profit him mentally, and much enrich the book.

Evidently this is a book for writing in, and as evidently Shakspeare is *then* writing in it. Moreover it has 'vacant leaves'—'waste blanks;' therefore it has pages that have been filled. And to the contents of these written pages

the Poet alludes: 'Of *this* book this learning may'st thou taste;' that is, the Earl will find in it other illustrations of the writer's present theme, which is youth's transiency and life's fleetness. This book, then, has been enriched by the Poet's writing; but if Southampton will take the pen in hand, and also write in the book, it will become much richer than it is now. '*This* book' shows that it is in Shakspeare's hand, but it does not belong to him. '*Thy* book' proves that it is the Earl's property. In this book, I doubt not, most of the Southampton sonnets were written, just as contributions may be made to an album, and in this particular sonnet we find the Poet actually writing in it. Now, there is every reason to conclude that this book is the same as the Earl has parted with in the following sonnet, and so I print the sonnet by itself, although it belongs, by its pleading and defensive tone, to those which treat of the last reconciliation of the lovers. It is of more value in another aspect, should it be the MS. book of the Southampton series, for it may have important bearings on the publication of Shakspeare's sonnets. It is in reply to an expostulation. The Earl, for he is the speaker, has given away a book. This book was, in the first place, a gift from his mistress, and, in the second place, it has been used as a record of her, for the purpose of scoring and keeping count, as it were, of his love—hence the comparison of it with 'tallies,' which were used for scoring accounts.

This book, given to the speaker by the person addressed, and used as a record of his love, a retainer of her image, has been parted with; perhaps, the lady thought, foolishly. The Earl makes his most complimentary defence, or the Poet does so for him. Her true tables are within his brain, she is there written, or engraved to all eternity; or, at least—here the writer was recalled by the physical fact—until brain and heart shall crumble into dust, her real record will remain there; a something that can never

be effaced, never given away. The gift of gifts was herself, not her gift-book, and the true tables are not that book, but his living brain. That 'poor retention' could not hold his love for her, nor does he need 'tallies,' her 'dear love to score,' therefore he made bold to give away the book, the tallies which contained his love-reckonings, the memorandum-book which retained her, as is cunningly suggested, on purpose to trust his memory and mental record all the more. If he had kept such a thing to remind him of her, it would have been a kind of reproach to himself, as it would charge him with being forgetful, so he has just dispensed with this artificial memory, and henceforth will depend on his natural one alone! Besides, it was altogether incapable of holding his large love!

This book was something very special for a sonnet to be written on the subject of its having been given away. The purpose to which it had been devoted is likewise as choice and particular. Shakspeare was not in the least likely to fill a book with sonnets *about* the Earl and then give it away, when they had been written *for* the Earl, nor did he keep 'tallies' to score the Earl's dear love for himself. The sonnet supports my reading in each single point, and by its total weight of evidence. The 'tallies, thy dear love to score,' were none other than the leaves of this gift-book, in which the Poet wrote his dramatic sonnets on the love of his friend for Elizabeth Vernon. The book had been a present from Mistress Vernon to the Earl of Southampton; his parting with it was one of her grievances; and Shakspeare had enriched its value with sonnets in his own hand-writing.

It may have been a table-book, such as were then in use, elegantly bound for a dainty hand. Aubrey, speaking of Sir Philip Sidney, says, 'my great uncle, Mr. T. Browne, remembered him; and said that he was wont to take his table-book out of his pocket and write down his notions

as they came into his head, when he was writing his "Arcadia," as he was hunting on our pleasant plains.' But 'thy gift—thy Tables,' does not necessarily mean the *Table*-book which you gave me. What the gift was has to be inferred from its use and by comparison. 'Thy Tables' signifies the most sensitive receiver of her true impression. Shakspeare is writing in his inclusive and, we may add, *infusive* way; he speaks of two things, and the larger contains the lesser.

This book, then, in which Shakspeare wrote sonnet 77, and which has been given away by the Earl in sonnet 122, must, Southampton being the speaker, have been the record of his love written, the tally that was kept by Shakspeare, the 'poor retention' of Elizabeth Vernon's beauty and goodness, which the Poet had held up so steadily in view of his friend, by means of the dramatic sonnets written in it! The lady has felt exceedingly annoyed that he should have held her gift and its contents so lightly, and this sonnet was written to soothe her all it could.

The reader will recollect that, in my reading of sonnet 38 (p. 157), I proposed to unclasp a secret book. This was not merely a metaphor; it was a veritable fact, but I have till now reserved my concluding argument and crowning illustration. In that sonnet, as we saw, the Poet was about to adopt a new argument, at the Earl's own suggestion, and a new method of writing which was of the Earl's own invention. This new argument is something too secretly precious to be written in the ordinary way, or even *on the ordinary paper which the Poet has been accustomed to use.* It is '*too excellent*,' he says, for '*every vulgar paper to rehearse.*' That is, the new subject of the Earl's suggesting and the new form of the Earl's inventing are too choice to be committed to common paper: which means that Shakspeare had until then written his personal sonnets on slips of paper provided by himself,

and now the excelling argument of the Earl's love is to be written in Southampton's own book—the book which was given to him by his Mistress for our Poet to write in. Thus, in sonnet 38, we see that Shakspeare is beginning to write in the book, which in sonnet 77 he is positively writing in; and that in the following sonnet this same book has been given away by the Earl of Southampton. In sonnet 38 it was to be devoted to the Earl's love, and in sonnet 122 it has been devoted to the celebration of his love for Elizabeth Vernon. There is a reference to the circle of 'private friends,' who were to read the sonnets in this book. 'If my slight Muse do please these curious days' must mean the private friends of the Earl and his Mistress, as the sonnets were not for public readers. It points to the privileged ones who were in the secret, and who were permitted to look at Mistress Vernon's gift-book. I further hold that the Earl of Southampton gave these MSS. to William Herbert, and that the first cause why Shakspeare's sonnets came into the world in so mysterious a manner, may be legitimately supposed to originate in this fact, that the Earl had given them away privately on his own account, and thus forestalled the Poet in the right to possess or print them; in all probability frustrating any such intentions of publishing, as he may at one time have entertained.

THE EARL TO ELIZABETH VERNON ON PARTING WITH A BOOK WHICH SHE HAD GIVEN TO HIM.

Thy gift—thy tables—are within my brain
Full-charactered with lasting memory,
Which shall above that idle rank[1] remain
Beyond all date, even to eternity;
Or, at the least, so long as brain and heart
Have faculty by nature to subsist,

[1] 'That idle rank.' The sonnets were the work of Shakspeare's 'idle hours!'

Till each to raised oblivion yield his part
Of thee, thy record never can be missed:
That poor retention[1] could not so much hold,
Nor need I tallies thy dear love to score,
Therefore to give them from me was I bold,
To trust those tables that receive thee more:
To keep an adjunct to remember thee,
Were to import forgetfulness in me. (122.)

[1] '*That poor retention is the table-book given to him by his friend.*'—MALONE. Nothing of the kind. The book spoken of in sonnet 77 is not Shakspeare's. It belongs to the person addressed. The speaker is writing in it, and he asks the Earl to commit his own thoughts to the waste blanks, the vacant leaves, of this book, which he calls '*thy book*,' just as he says '*thy glass*,' and '*thy dial*.' So that it is impossible for the Earl's book of sonnet 77 to be given away by Shakspeare in sonnet 122. It is a *paper book* having some leaves written on, others blank. The speaker does not, in either case, say thy 'table-book.' He says in effect the gift-book which contained the lady's tables. Table being the ancient term for a picture, Shakspeare uses it in the pictorial, rather than in the note-book sense. This book, which was the lady's gift, contained pictures of her, charactered by the Pen. The Earl has parted with the book, but he says *her* tables, *not* her book, are within his brain, her truest picture-place, not to be parted with and never to be effaced.

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

THE 'DARK' LADY OF THE LATTER SONNETS.

'Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.'

We now come to the last group of Shakspeare's sonnets—a series that tells a somewhat doubtful story; doubtful, that is, in regard to the speaker and the person addressed; otherwise, the story is uncommonly plain, and the speaker is infatuated with a Mistress whose character is not in the least doubtful. The passion is one of those which Horace calls 'the tortures that urge men to confess their secret.' Others wonder what he sees in her to compel his worship with such fire-offerings of love. They cannot find anything in her face or features that should make 'love groan.' Nor can he, when he comes to look closely at her. He is astonished that it should be so; he finds no warrant for her wonderful sway over his foolish heart, and he asks: 'Oh, from what power hast thou this powerful might with insufficiency my heart to sway, to make me give the lie to my true sight, so that in the very refuse of thy deeds thou canst so influence my mind that I think thy worst exceeds the best of all others?' He is told, and he himself sees, her moral deformity; her character is quite plain to him, it lies before his eyes, bare and black as the harbour-mouth at the lowest ebb of tide, and

yet his foolish heart dotes on her, loves her the more, the more he hears and sees just cause of hate, and, in spite of himself, he is compelled to follow the footprints of a beauty gone by. Unaccountable as is the charm of her presence, her tyranny over him is fierce as could be that of those whose beauties proudly make them cruel, and whose sway would be explicable and natural. She has glorious black eyes, but then her deeds are as black. He knows that his own eyes are corrupted by over-partial looks, and that he vainly seeks to enclose in the embrace of his love one of the 'wide world's common places,' but this knowledge does not help him to his deliverance. It is not easy to convert such knowledge into wisdom.

The story is grimly real; the nature and strength of the passion are prominent as a wrestler's muscles: the sonnets differ from the others as dark from day. And it is the passion of a youth, that devouring flame which a dallying, dangerous woman of years knows so well how to fan with a whisper, setting the blood all ablaze with a subtle smile. In sonnet 143, it is youth in the pathos of its plea; in sonnet 147, it is youth in the fever of its passion, and in sonnet 151, youth in the grossness of ebuliant blood. The feeling is absolutely that of youth; the arguments are youthful, and youthfulness is the sole excuse of the sonnets. That the woman is much older than the speaker is conclusively shown by the whole feeling, thought, and imagery of sonnet 143, in which the lover calls himself *her Babe*!

But there is nothing to connect them with Shakspeare's youth! They are printed as though they were the latest written, and we have no right, no reason to disturb that arrangement. Moreover, there is evidence to prove that they were written late, the same as there is to show that the earlier ones were written before certain plays, viz. in the thought, image or expression being used first in the sonnet, and repeated soon afterwards in the drama. On

this ground alone we may trace the parallel progress of the sonnets and plays. For example, to refer back to the Southampton series, the line in sonnet 89, (p. 246)—

'For I must ne'er love him whom thou dost hate,'

reappears in 'Much Ado about Nothing,' as—

'For I will never love that which my friend hates.'

Also the thought of these lines from sonnet 122, p. 321—

'Thy gift, thy tables, are within my brain
Full charactered with lasting memory;
Which shall above that idle rank remain
Beyond all date, even to eternity:
Or at the least so long as brain and heart
Have faculty by nature to subsist'—

is reproduced in 'Hamlet':—

'From the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain.
Remember thee?
Ay, thou poor ghost while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe.' Act. i. Sc. 5.

Again, in sonnet 88 (p. 234)—

'With mine own weakness being best acquainted,
Upon thy part I can set down a story
Of faults concealed wherein I am attainted.'

So Hamlet—

'I could accuse me of such things, that it were better my mother had not borne me.'

In sonnet 116 (p. 285), which was written about the time of the Earl's marriage, we read:—

'Love's not love
That alters when it alteration finds.'

And in 'King Lear'—

'Love's not love
When it is mingled with regards that stand
Aloof from the entire point.'

But the greatest proof of all that there is some guidance in this method of following Shakspeare occurs in the sonnet of 1603, on the death of the Queen and the liberation of Southampton (p. 311). In this we have—

'The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured.'

and in 'Antony and Cleopatra'—

'Alack, our terrene moon is now eclipsed.'

Again, in the same sonnet—

'And peace proclaims olives of endless age.'

And in the same play—

'Prove this a prosperous day the three-nooked world shall bear the olive freely.'

The chief resemblances betwixt these latter sonnets and the plays occur in 'King Lear,' 'Othello,' 'Macbeth,' and 'Antony and Cleopatra.'

Here are a few lines paralleled :—

'Robbed other's beds' revenues of their rents.'
Sonnet 142.

'And pour our treasures into foreign laps.'
Othello.

'Be it lawful I love thee as thou lov'st those
Whom thine eyes woo as mine importune thee.'
Sonnet 142.

'Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.'
King Lear.

'And patience, tame to sufferance, bide each check.'
Sonnet 58.

'A most poor man, made tame to fortune's blows.'
EDGAR, *in King Lear.*

'Commanded by the motion of thine eyes.'
Sonnet 149.

'He waged me with his countenance.'

Coriolanus.

Also—

'Her gentlewomen like the Nereides
So many mermaids tended her i' the eyes.'

Antony and Cleopatra.

'If eyes corrupt by over-partial looks,
Be anchored in the bay,' &c.

Sonnet 173.

'Then should he anchor his aspect and die
With looking on his life.'

Antony and Cleopatra.

'To put fair truth upon so foul a face.'

Sonnet 137.

'False face must hide what the false heart doth know.'

Macbeth.

'Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill?'

Sonnet 150.

'Vilest things become themselves in her.'

Antony and Cleopatra.

We find the greatest number of resemblances in 'Antony and Cleopatra.' Here, however, as in the more striking features of the earlier sonnets, the likeness is a personal one. We may safely conclude, from internal evidence, that the present group was written after those sonnets which are devoted to the courtship of Southampton; and it is enough to know that the speaker in these sonnets is far too young for it to have been Shakspeare himself at the time when they must have been written.

Further, to my thinking, sonnet 152 contains indubitable proof that the speaker is not a married man. It brings the question to an issue. He distinctly charges the lady with being married and untrue to her wedding bed and bond. Then he admits that he, too, is foresworn, and that she knows him to be so. But he says she is twice fore-

sworn, in being false to her husband and false to him. And, having said the worst of her, hurled at her the most damning charges, he turns on himself with a revulsion of feeling, determined to show himself as the most perjured oath-breaker of the two. Now, surely, we shall have it! He is about to prove, in bitterness of heart, that he is more perjured than she, and that his sins are of a deeper dye than hers. Therefore, one would have thought that, if a married man and anxious for self-condemnation, desirous of showing himself in a still lower gulf of guilt, the first thing he would have done would be, to point out that he was *as bad as her in kind*, being himself married, and, possibly, worse than her in an indefinite degree, because he was the father of a family. Instead of this—instead of a manly voice heavy with passion or dogged with determination to say the worst, we hear the treble of a youth, asking, 'but why of two oaths' breach do I accuse thee, when I break twenty?' And what are the twenty oaths sworn and vows broken by him? Why, he has sworn that she was kind, loving, truthful, and fifty other pretty things, which are all lovers' lies; his perjury consists of oaths in her praise. And this has been imagined to be Shakspeare speaking of himself, under the most self-culpatory circumstances. The married man who has cruelly charged her with her crime, which would appear to have been committed for his sake, and then tried to turn the reproach from his cowardly self by a playful handling of the subject!

The thing is simply inconceivable; totally incapable of a positive image, as the metaphysicians say. So is it with sonnet 143, of which Steevens has remarked 'the beginning is at once pleasing and natural, but the conclusion of it is lame and impotent indeed. We attend to the cries of the infant, but we laugh at the loud blubbering of the great boy, Will.' And well we might, if Shakspeare, who, in an earlier sonnet, has painted the leaf of his life in

autumnal tint, and appeared to have felt the evening of his day folding about him, and seen its shadows lengthening in the sunset, had here represented himself in love with, and stark mad for, a bold bad woman—by the image of a poor little infant, a tender child, toddling after its mammy, and crying for her apron-corner to hold by, and her kiss to still its whimpering discontent. This would be laughable, if not too lamentable. But Shakspeare did not write to be laughed at, nor did he in his riper years, put forth what would, if he were the speaker, be pure maudlin, and the very degradation of pathos. The blunder of the imagery would have been almost worse than the criminal infatuation. But this is not the personal wooing of the man who carried within him the furnace of passion, in which the swart lineaments and orient gorgeousness of Cleopatra glow superbly,—the lightnings that leap from out the huge cloudy sorrows of old Lear,—the awful power that in Lady Macbeth can darken the moral atmosphere, past the seeing of the colour of blood,—the flashes of nether flame, which play like serpent tongues about Othello's love, till they have licked up its life-springs!

Again, we are asked to believe that, after Shakspeare had written to be laughed at, after he had published his private shame in so hideous a self-exposure, for the amusement of his patron and friends, he addressed that solemn 146th sonnet to his soul, by way of self-admonition! We are to suppose this and the 129th sonnet to contain comments on his own degradation—a sermon to himself; which, if the rest of the tale were true, would be a mockery indeed. The 129th sonnet is obviously written for a purpose, but that purpose is to knit and strengthen another against the sin which is his special shame. The generalised excuse of the last lines shows that it is not personal to the writer—

> 'All this the world well knows, yet none knows well,
> To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.'

That is neither Shakspeare's own morality nor his own personal excuse for a criminal relationship. It is the same as with the closing argument of sonnet 121 (p. 272)—only possible on behalf of another person than the writer, and only springing from an exigency of private friendship. These two sonnets, 24th and 25th of the present series, contain matter enough, properly moralised, to convince all who have ever approached the real soul of Shakspeare, that the latter sonnets were not written on an amour of his own. They ought to be sufficient to set us right on the subject, even if we had for awhile done him the injustice of thinking he could have been so bad, and babbled about it so foolishly. On the score of personal character alone, we should be entitled to assume that the subject of these sonnets was not of Shakspeare's own choosing, but imposed on him by one of the 'private friends' for whom he wrote. It has no touch of his quality. In his dramas he abets no intrigues of the kind; encourages no treacheries to the marriage bed; is no dealer in adulteries. His wholesomeness in this respect is unimpeachable, and it is unparalleled amongst the dramatists of his or the following age. My interpretation is, that these sonnets were written for William Herbert; that the 'Will,' of this series is the 'Mr. W. H.' of the Dedication, and that they were written whilst his name was Herbert.

It will not be necessary for me to enter much into detail to prove that this young nobleman was a personal friend of Shakspeare. The advocates of the theory that Herbert was the 'Only Begetter' of the sonnets, have laboured utterly in vain if they failed to show thus much! Whilst those who hold Herbert to be the sole begetter of the sonnets cannot, for the time being, become my opponents, whilst I show how he was *one of the begetters.* It is a fact of much significance, that the first play presented to King James in England was performed by Shakspeare's company in Herbert's house at Wilton. Also

the emphasis of the players' words, *bears far more on a private friendship than upon any facts that have been made public:* they carry the imagination behind the scenes. In their dedication to the first folio they tell us the Earl of Pembroke had *prosecuted the Poet with so much favour that they venture to hope for the same indulgence towards the works as was shown to the parent of them.* Herbert was an intimate friend of Shakspeare's friends Southampton and Essex. He was too young or too indifferent to become a prominent partisan of Essex, or, rather as I read it, he was more in love with the Earl's sister than with his cause.

When he first came to Court, as we learn by Rowland White's Letters,[1] of the year 1599, Lord Herbert was greatly beloved by everyone; and the kindly old gossip hopes he will prove a great man there. He is highly favoured by the Queen, who is very gracious to the young Lord. He is of sufficient mark and likelihood in 1599 for White to wish that Sir Robert Sidney may be lucky enough to find in him a 'ladder to go up to that honour,' White holds his master to be so worthy of. Still, he does not care to climb the steep and slippery ascent up which so many crawl, or become the petted lap-dog of Majesty, and is inclined to make way for others who pursue the matter with more persistency; he does not follow the Courtier's business with the necessary care and caution. We find that 'My Lord Herbert is much blamed for his cold and weak manner of pursuing *her Majesty's favour, having so good steps to lead him unto it.*' Evidently his heart as a Courtier is elsewhere than with her Majesty. August 18th, 1599, White says, 'My Lord Herbert hath been from Court these seven days in London, swaggering it amongst the men of war, and viewing the manner of the musters.'[2] September 8th, same year, 'My Lord Herbert

[1] *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. ii.

[2] There had been a sudden alarm of the Spaniards coming. Order was given for a camp to be raised, and ships were preparing in all haste.

is a continual Courtier, but *doth not follow his business with that care as is fit*; *he is too cold a courtier in a matter of such greatness.*' He is charged with a want of spirit and courage, and is said to be a '*melancholy young man.*' Also, 'it is muttered that *young Sir Henry Carey stands to be a Favourite*,' and White appears to be jealous of 'young Carey' who *follows it*—the prize of favourites—'*with more care and boldness.*' White does not account for the young Lord's listlessness as a Courtier, his indifference to the Royal caresses, nor for his melancholy as a man. It is not that he wants a wife, for, when the subject of his marriage is mooted, White says, 'I don't find any disposition in this gallant young lord to marry.' He has a continual pain in the head, for which he finds no relief except in smoking tobacco. More than once White hints that the young Lord is *greatly in want of advice.* He is a very gallant gentleman, but he needs such a friend as Sir R. Sidney to be near him. My interpretation of Lord Herbert's symptoms, as detailed by Rowland White, is that he was in love, but not as his friends would have wished; he was then nursing a secret flame for the Lady Rich, the woman of various lovers. My immediate object, however, is to show from White's Letters that in the years 1599 and 1600 William Herbert was received at Court by Her Majesty in the most friendly manner, and might have been *favourite* 'an he would.' Next, to point out that during the two years following a great change took place in the Queen's personal regards toward him. I doubt not there is more evidence extant than I have been able to collect, but some lines by John Davies will suffice for my purpose. In his ode of rejoicing upon the accession of James to the English throne, Davies congratulates the Earl of Pembroke, amongst others, upon the change that has taken place, and his prospect of a more inviting future at Court. He says—

'Pembroke to Court, *to which thou wert made strange,*
Go! do thine homage to thy Sovereign:
Weep and rejoice for this sad joyful change,
Then weep for joy: thou *need'st not tears to fain,*
Sith late thine eyes did nought else entertain.'

We see by this that the Earl had, before the death of Elizabeth, been looked on coldly at Court; that he had kept or been kept from it, and suffered some bitterness of feeling which had filled his eyes with tears. My explanation is, that the estrangement arose from his being the personal friend of Essex and Southampton—the over-warm admirer of Lady Rich. We may learn how suspiciously the Queen had eyed any friend of theirs after their Trial, by a Letter of Cecil's to Winwood,[1] wherein he speaks of Sir Henry Danvers, whom Lord Mountjoy had employed to bring the report of his success in Ireland as a good opportunity to help him to kiss her Majesty's hands: '*in whose good opinion he hath been a good while suspended, being known to be more devoted to the late Earl than became him.*' We may also see, by a letter from the Earl of Nottingham to Lord Mountjoy, to be quoted later, how closely and jealously the Queen was accustomed to watch the bearing of those for whom the Lady Rich had superior charms, and to whom her eyes were lodestars. I suspect, however, that Herbert was drawn towards Essex and away from the Court by an influence that was amatory rather than political. Late in the year 1599 Lady Rich had left the Court, as is reported, on account of her character, never to recover her lost place in the Queen's favour whilst Elizabeth lived; and in the September of this year 'My Lord Mountjoy, with the Lord Herbert and Sir Charles Danvers, have been at Wanstead these four days.' Again, in the May of the next year we find that Herbert was paying a visit of three days' length to Lady Rich and Lady Southampton, in company with the same trusty friend

[1] *Winwood's Memorials*, vol. i. p. 370.

of Southampton, who laid down his life for him and Essex on Tower-hill. In a letter dated May 26th, 1600, White says:—

'This Morning (Monday) my Lord Herbert and Sir Charles Danvers have taken water and gone to see my Lady Rich and Lady Southampton, almost as far as Gravesend; it will be Thursday ere they return.' This plainly enough strikes the trail of my subject: it shows the intimacy of the persons with whom my theory is concerned, and it gives a possible clue to the meaning which Rowland White's letters only hint at darkly. Herbert was 'greatly in need of advice,' questionless because of the friendships he cultivated and the company he kept—these being most unpleasing in her Majesty's sight, for the Earl of Essex and his sister, Lady Rich, were now both out of favour; the Essex fortunes were falling, their star was fading, and the dark end was coming fast. We may judge how her Majesty would resent this wandering away of Lord Herbert in such a pursuit by another Letter of Rowland White's,[1] dated December 28th, 1602, in which he speaks of something that concerns the fortunes of the Sidney family, and says—'The storm continues now and then; but *all depends upon my Lady Rich's being or not being amongst you.*' Evidently hers was at that time a perilous acquaintanceship. The Earl of Southampton and his Countess were also in the deepest shadow of her Majesty's displeasure.

Thus, I conclude that the young Lord Herbert's coldness as a Courtier was owing to his warmth elsewhere, and that it was mainly by the influence of Lady Rich he was drawn from the path which Rowland White was so anxious for him to follow, and finally caused him to lose the favour of the Queen altogether. There is in sonnet 149 a touching allusion to the estrangements which the lady has occasioned, and apparently to the loss of friends for her sake—

[1] *Sydney Papers*, vol. ii. p. 262.

'Who hateth thee that I do call my friend?
On whom frown'st thou that I do fawn upon?'

These latter sonnets, then, I hold to be written dramatically by Shakspeare to express William Herbert's passion for Lady Rich.

As we have seen, the Southampton sonnets almost ceased with the Earl's marriage in 1598—their chief end and aim being then accomplished. In the year 1598, William Herbert had come to live in London,[1] and possibly through his intimacy with Lord Southampton, had met with Shakspeare and soon acquired some personal influence over our Poet. The time was most opportune. The young Lord could not take the warm place in his heart which had been consecrated to Southampton; he did not call forth any such fragrance of affection as breathes through the sonnets devoted to the earlier, dearer friend of Shakspeare. But he had winning ways, was a lover of poets, and something of a poet himself. As a friend of Southampton, and of Lady Rich, he would be early acquainted with the 'sugred sonnets' of the Southampton series.

I have suggested that he was the friend, the young enthusiastic seeker of Shakspeare's 'sonnets among his private friends,' to whom Southampton had given the book in sonnet 122 (p. 321) which book had been a present from Elizabeth Vernon to the Earl, and contained most of their sonnets! It followed, as a matter of course, that Herbert should be ambitious of having sonnets by Shakspeare devoted to himself. But how was this to be done? Shakspeare was now getting past his sonneteering time. He could never renew for Herbert the old affection which had set him singing for Southampton in the spring-tide. Before the first cycle of sonnets was completed, he had felt

[1] Lord Herbert was in London, April 3rd, 1597, on a visit to the Sidneys, as we learn by White's letter of that date ('Sydney Memoirs,' vol. ii. p. 35), and '*by my Lord Herbert's coming into the garden.*'

the autumnal influence touching his riper manhood and hushing that burst of music which once set all the green thickets of young life thrilling, and he had pleaded

> 'Our love was new and then but in the spring
> When I was wont to greet it with my lays,
> As Philomel in summer's front doth sing
> And stops her pipe in growth of riper days.'

This spring, this love, these songs could not be repeated for another. I imagine Shakspeare was not seriously inclined to write at all for Herbert. He must have felt it tended to make common the mould of expression which had been hallowed by real love for Southampton, made sacred for ever by the privacy of their personal friendship and the tender uses for which many of the sonnets had been written. But Herbert, as the players tell us, '*pursued him with so much favour*,' was very urgent in his solicitations, and Shakspeare good-naturedly willing to oblige. Being, as he fancied, deeply and desperately in love with Lady Rich, a friend of his family, a companion beauty to his mother, a lady who must have entered the young lord's heart by the way of his imagination, as the object of Sidney's poetry and prose, there is nothing more natural than that Herbert should have sought to get his passion besung by Shakspeare. The Poet enters into the humour of the thing so far as to laugh at the disparity of their ages. He rallies his friend on the absurdity of his passion; fights all he may against his infatuation; renders with all possible plainness the lady's well-known character, and once or twice grows very serious on the subject, and as in sonnets 129 and 146, administers a tonic to the frantic inamorato, wrapt up and gilded in the gold leaf of the poetry.

It is apparent that if 'Master W. H.' be meant for William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, he must have had something to do with the sonnets, not only as the collector

and obtainer of them for the press, but as a party to the private mystery out of which the public one arose, to have had the right to give them to Thorpe. I say what his part in the *imbranglement* was, and there is little need for me to argue the possibility of that which is capable of demonstration.

Shakspeare, as we have seen, had written dramatically for Southampton, therefore it was most likely that if he wrote at all for Herbert he would use the same form, and my argument that Herbert himself supplied his own sentiments and subject, as Southampton had done, is suggested by the familiar use of his name in the puns upon the word 'Will.' I assume that Herbert used the sonnets as though they had been written by himself.

At first sight, it looks as if sonnet 138 was against my view of the speaker's youth, but a little more study will enable us to see how this sonnet will supply such proof of his youth and the lady's age as will serve to clench my conclusion on this head. We must bear in mind that a new element enters into the composition of these latter sonnets. They become playful and ironic at times. In sonnet 96, there is irony of a most bitter kind. The speaker assumes to be concerned for the 'good report' of the lady who, in sonnet 131, is black in her deeds—in 137, is the 'wide world's commonplace'—in sonnet 142, has profaned her lips by sealing false bonds of love, and in sonnet 147, is 'black as hell, as dark as night.' In sonnet 138 the irony is of a smiling kind, the meaning altogether covert. The writer here uses the form '*Noema*,' or, as Puttenham has it, the figure of '*Close Conceit*.' The subject really is not the *age* in the usual sense, but the extreme youth of the speaker. The word 'age' conveys a double-pointed joke!

This sonnet was printed in 1599, therefore it must have been written when William Herbert was in his nineteenth

or twentieth year.[1] It is spoken in merry mockery, half on account of his youth, and half on account of the lady's age, for she is seventeen years older than him and getting on towards forty! The facts are partly reversed, the explanation is wrong by intention, on purpose to increase the jest. The '*simple* truth' certainly was suppressed on both sides, and thereby fun was made in the demurest fashion. The young rogue knew well enough that his days were not past the best, and so did the lady; both also knew whose days were! But the lady's age being a ticklish point, that point is here used to produce the greatest amount of tickling. As the sonnet says, with a sly simplicity, 'age in love loves not to have years told.' It is not necessary, however, to personify 'Age,' as readers have done, though the printers did not. This explanation looked so natural that its sedateness has never been suspected. No one has seen how this might apply equally to youth in love; the quip has never been descried. To prove that my reading is right, we have only to compare this sonnet with the copy printed in the 'Passionate Pilgrim,' which would be the version made use of in sending to the lady! In that the lady's lies turn on *her own age*, and the ninth line asks—

'But *wherefore says my Love that she is young?*'

Which gives us the clue to the true interpretation of the sonnet, supplies the necessary opposition betwixt age and youth, adjusts the right relationship of the persons, shows how and why there are lies on both sides, and thus reveals the humour of the treatment. The youth's manner of speaking of himself and his years is partly a pleasant bit of satire on the lady's habit of not acknowledging her own age! She swears she is not more than thirty or so, and that she tells truth; he smilingly credits 'her false-speaking tongue,' although he knows well enough that she tells lies.

[1] Born February 8th, 1580.

'But wherefore says my Love that *she is young?*
And wherefore say not I that *I am old?*
O! love's best habit is a soothing tongue,
And *age, in love, loves not to have years told.*'

Therefore he lies on the score of his age, because she does, and so they disguise the disparity by lying together. The meeting-point of both, in the last line quoted, being that the lady objects to the truth on account of her *many* years; the youth because his years are so *few*, and he has the desire to be thought more of a man than his years warrant.

The 'Passionate Pilgrim' has '*Smiling* I credit her false-speaking tongue,' which was altered in the later copy to '*simply* I credit'—the smiling being too *conscious* an expression for a youth; the other more appropriately demure and tending to point the play on '*simple* truth,' which has to be suppressed in the next line. The *simplicity* here has a touch of Shakspeare in his Autolycus mood: 'Ha, ha! what a fool Honesty is, and Trust, his sworn brother, a very simple gentleman!' Even so has it been with the simplicity and trust of the readers of these sonnets, who have been completely deceived by the merry masker's serious face. This interpretation of sonnet 138 helps to prove that the 96th of necessity belongs to the Herbert series, with its opening innuendo, 'Some *say* thy fault is *youth*.'

But we have not quite done with the two versions of this sonnet. It was most lucky that Jaggard did get hold of the earlier copy, for without it we could not have seen on what the lady's lying turned, when she swore that she told the truth, nor could we have detected the speaker's youth, or perceived how the 'simple truth' was suppressed on *both* sides, if we had not known what the lying was about. The earlier copy proves that her lies were on the score of her age. It also serves to make us curious respecting the alteration. Why should the sonnet have been corrected so carefully, and for the worse? As

in making the change the Poet loses the antithesis between *young* and *old*—the grain of salt that he liked to see sparkle in his lines; and the real subject of the lady's lies disappears altogether. There must have been private and particular reasons for generalising thus vaguely.

It must have been apprehended that the line—

'But wherefore says my Love that she is young?'

might excite suspicion, and the whole story be got at; another touch was needed to perfect the disguise. And so we catch the Poet, unless the change was made by Herbert himself, doing a bit of work analogous to that which has to be performed by the stealers of marked linen, viz. picking out the proof of ownership.

This speaker then is so young that his years, in contrast with the lady's age, can be treated as matter for a laugh in the sleeve; he is unmarried, and his Christian name is 'Will.' All the testimony on the score of character unites with the other evidence in proof that this is young William Herbert, not William Shakspeare; he was a spirit of a different complexion, a man of another mould, and, at the time *neither young enough to be the speaker with the humorous reading, nor old enough for the serious interpretation* hitherto accepted, he being just 35, exactly 'midway in this our mortal life.' At which period of perfect manhood and ripened power, his days could not possibly have been 'past the best.' If he were the speaker, the sonnet would have no meaning. For he would not be lying in saying that he was not old, and the '*simple truth*' could not have been suppressed by his not admitting that he *was* old.

When Shakspeare described himself as older-looking than his years justified in the Southampton sonnets, he had an object; here, however, such a policy in love would have been fatally opposed to his object. It is not the wont of men at 35 years of age, who are passionately pursuing a woman, to talk of their days being 'past the

best,' or assume, in writing to the lady, that they personify 'Age in love.' But it seems that nothing was too unnatural to be committed by this writer, who of all men came the nearest to nature! The 'simple truth' for us is just this: Shakspeare is not the speaker of this sonnet. It is the youth who is imaged in sonnet 143 as running after the lady, like a little child following and crying for its mother, and who pleads, in sonnet 151, that 'love is *too young* to know what conscience is.'

It is likewise my settled conviction, not only that these sonnets were written for William Herbert upon subjects given by him for the Poet to work out, but that Herbert himself had a hand in their composition. They are frequently much less perfect than the earlier ones. Hence it has been conjectured that, although they are the last printed, they were earlier written, bearing, as they do, some unmistakeable marks of youth. But the youthfulness I hold to be not that of Shakspeare's early writing. The 'Will,' whose name is played upon, and to whom they are inscribed, had sufficient to do with the printing to ensure that the series devoted to him came into its proper place, just *as the first and the last groups of the Southampton cycle are in their right position.* And he also, I doubt not, had something to do with the writing of these latter sonnets. Herbert was himself a poet, with a lively sparkle of fancy, but too much given to grossness. He, and not William Hunnis, who died in 1597, is the 'W. H.' of England's Helicon, and this is one of his pleasant conceits.

'How shall I her pretty tread
Express
When she doth walk?
Scarce she does the primrose head
Depress
Or tender stalk
Of blue-veined violets,
Whereon her foot she sets.'

Again, he makes a lover ask, prettily enough,—

'What voice is this, I prithee mark,
With so much music in it!
Too sweet methinks to be a lark,
Too loud to be a linnet.'

In these we find the precise play of fancy, amount of mind, and sort of poetry that go to the making of the following canzonet:—

'Those lips that Love's own hand did *make*
Breathed forth the sound that said "*I hate,*"
To me that languished for her *sake*:
But, when she saw my woful *state,*
Straight in her heart did mercy *come,*
Chiding that tongue that, ever sweet,
Was used in giving gentle *doom,*
And taught it thus anew to greet:
"I hate" she altered with an *end*
That followed it as gentle Day
Doth follow Night who, like a *fiend,*
From heaven to hell is flown away:
"I hate"—from hate away she *threw,*
And saved my life, saying—"not *you*!"'

(145.)

Any, the slightest, examination of these lines must tend to a conviction that this is not one of Shakspeare's sonnets. It is not in his measure,[1] but in the very verse which one feels he disliked,[2] the kind of which Touchstone says, 'I'll rhyme you so eight years together, dinners and

[1] That the lines are not in our Poet's measure is some evidence against their being of his writing. In sonnet 76 (p. 254) he had excused himself for always using the same measure, never changing the familiar dress of his thought, 'Keeping Invention in a noted weed.'

[2] A measure that he has travestied for the purpose of mockery. See the song of Peter in 'Romeo and Juliet,' act iv. sc. 4:—

'When griping grief the heart doth wound,
And doleful dumps the mind oppress;'

which mimics an old song beginning—

'When griping griefes do grieve the mind,'

suppers and sleeping-hours excepted; it is the right butter-woman's rank to market, the very false gallop of verses.' The lines start with a false note in the sound of the four first endings. Our Poet's ear would not have tolerated so uncertain a difference in the sound as exists between the words 'make' and 'hate,' 'sake' and 'state.' Shakspeare's lines go off with a hearty smack of difference which brings them out full and satisfying to the ear, so that the rhymes percuss with no uncertain sound. Next, there are three imperfect rhymes in 'come' and 'doom,' 'end' and 'fiend,' 'threw' and 'you,' All of which Shakspeare may have used at times, but he never crowded them into so small a space. The lines have nothing of our Poet's; matter or manner; neither *his kind* of playful conceit nor his musical gravity; they no more possess his mental stature than they do his length of line; they are a bit of pretty apprentice work, and have no touch of the Master's hand. I hold them to be William Herbert's. Sonnet 130, likewise, is as palpably different from the others near it as it would appear if printed in red ink whilst the rest were all printed in black. It does not wear the vesture of Shakspeare's mind; has neither the dark depth of his thought nor the smiling surface of his expression. It is in fact an imitation of sonnet 21, p. 132, which says:—

> 'O! let me, true in love, but truly write,
> And then, believe me, my Love is as fair
> As any mother's child, tho' not so bright
> As those gold candles fixed in heaven's air.'

The early sonnet is a protest against the use of false comparisons for the purpose of flattery, and the latter concludes with the lines:—

> 'And yet, by heaven, I think my Love as rare
> As any she belied with false compare.'

to be found in the 'Forest of Fancy,' a very rare and interesting old collection, 'Imprinted by Thos. Purfoote, dwelling in Newgate Market, within the New Rents, at the sign of 'Lucrece,' London, 1570.

It is also a *third* address to the Mistress's eyes; moreove I do not think Shakspeare would have made *wires grow* A different kind of repetition occurs in sonnet 96, one tha it is impossible to explain on the personal theory :—

> 'But do not so, I love thee in such sort,
> As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.'

These lines have been used once before in sonnet 36 (p. 177) where the feeling has the eagerness and purity of trues love, and they are repeated in a spirit of sheer *mockery* the comparisons are sarcastic, and the plea of the repeate lines is intentionally and utterly ironic. My explanatio of this is that the *sonnet is one of Herbert's*; that he being possibly in the way I have shown, in possession of a copy of the Southampton Sonnets, took the liberty of quotin two lines of one of them, which were very suitable t his purpose, because susceptible of a double meaning I find it next to impossible to read as Shakspeare's th lumbering line—

> 'Thou *mak'st faults graces* that to thee resort.'

He does not stumble amongst the consonants in that way his sense of accent and the relief of alliteration were to true.

The curious in such matters may find in Herbert's ow Poems[1] proof that the writer of them is one in nature age and taste with the speaker of these sonnets. There i proof in his own handwriting, so to say, that he was per sonally a sufferer from exactly such a passion as is her painted, and that he addressed a lady, the very same i character and kind of charm, as is here imaged by Shak speare—not as an object of worship, but for the purpos

[1] Poems, written by William, Earl of Pembroke, many of which ar answered by Sir William Rudyard; with other poems written by them occasionally and apart. 1650. Of these poems Mr. Hallam observes 'Some are grossly indecent, but they throw no light whatever on th Sonnets of Shakspeare.'

of disparagement and depreciation. This was not the lady who afterwards became the celebrated Countess of Devonshire. That lady, we are told, was the object of Herbert's 'chaste idolatry;' this lady of whom we speak was just the reverse. He has presented her picture in some lines replying to a friend who had flatly given his opinion of the lady, and wondered what the young Earl could see in her to admire:—

'One with admiration[1] told me,
He did wonder much and marvel,
(As, by chance, he did behold ye)
How I could become so servile
To thy beauty, which he swears
Every alehouse lattice wears.

'Then he frames a second motion,
From thy revoluting eyes,
Saying—such a wanton motion
From their lustre did arise,
That of force thou could'st not be
From the shame of women free!'

This is the lady of the latter sonnets, feature by feature; her whole character summed up briefly with a perfect tally. Sonnet 131 says—

'*Some say that thee behold,*
Thy face hath not the power to make love groan.'

Here is the same *servility* to the beauty that is quite incommensurate in appearance to the effects which it produces—the beauty so accosting that it is merely a sign like that of an alehouse, which aptly expresses the 'wide world's commonplace' of sonnet 137—the SERVILITY felt by the 'proud heart's slave and vassal wretch' of sonnet 141. Then there is the very motion of those eyes so often dwelt on in the sonnets, and, looking in at their windows, we see the same interior, the same fire aglow,

[1] 'Admiration,' *i.e.* Surprise.

the same picture of Paphos. One of Herbert's poems, commencing 'Oh, do not tax me with a brutish love,' is alike in argument with sonnet 141; and all through there is the same inexplicable infatuation, though this is rendered so much more powerfully by the hand of Shakspeare. Having reached the conclusion, then, that William Herbert is the 'Will' of these latter sonnets, it further appears to me that all the probabilities point to one person, and all the evidence tends to the identification of Penelope Rich as the lady addressed.

We might fairly enough assume that these sonnets were in some way an issue of the earlier ones; or that the same friends and acquaintances are bound up by some personal link of connection in the Book as they were in life and in their relation to the Poet. However diverse in subject they may be, we cannot but infer that there is some meeting-place of the same persons from the fact, that the sonnets come to us as Shakspeare's Sonnets, undoubtedly gathered up by one of the friends who knew of their unity. Then the way in which they are mixed most curiously illustrates the intimacy of the persons, and the interchange of the sonnets. Thus we find some of Elizabeth Vernon's in company with those addressed to the other lady, and some of the '*dark*' lady's mixed up with Elizabeth Vernon's. Also the two sonnets which were printed in the 'Passionate Pilgrim' were single sonnets belonging to two separate stories, and yet they come into print together, which has a look of their having met in the hands of one and the same person, who was the object of both. If it be Lady Rich in the one sonnet, it will be in the other.

The testimony of character, too, is very conclusive. Even with the personal interpretation, it has been taken for granted that the lady whom Shakspeare is supposed to have loved so madly in these latter sonnets was one with the Mistress of whom the friend was supposed to

have robbed the Poet in the earlier ones, and this probability is vastly increased by the present reading. The lady of whom Elizabeth Vernon is jealous and afraid possesses the closest natural affinity to the Circe of these latter sonnets. We have only to allow for the deeper hues into which such a character rapidly darkens for the likeness to be dramatically perfect. In sonnets 40 and 41 (pp. 208 and 210) she is the wanton wooer of another woman's lover, and the 'Lascivious Grace,' with such power in transforming evil into an appearance of good that *all ill shows well* in her; and in sonnet 150, there is the same '*becoming of things ill.*' In the Jealousy sonnets her '*foul pride*,' her 'steel bosom,' and her 'cruel eye' are dwelt upon by one victim of her iron rule and imperious will. The same character, the precise characteristics, are reproduced here, where another victim is made bitterly to feel her tyrannizing power; there is the same commanding motion of the peculiar eyes, the same cruel pride in their power to enthrall; the same matters for that public gossip which has grown bolder with her name, as her reputation has become worse. Matters are now more serious, and the language has grown more emphatic, but the lady is one with the 'woman coloured ill,' in sonnet 144 (p. 205), and likely enough to lead souls to hell—the same as her of whose 'false adulterate eyes' we catch a glance in sonnet 121 (p. 271); the same person as is mockingly addressed in the seventh sonnet of the present group :—

> 'Thou *mak'st faults graces* that to thee resort,
> As on the finger of a thronéd Queen,
> The basest jewel will be well-esteemed:
> *So are those errors that in thee are seen,*
> *To truths translated* and for true things deemed.

With this evidence alone I could venture to submit my case, whether the object of Elizabeth Vernon's Jealousy and the so-called 'dark lady' of these sonnets be not one

and the same person, because of my great reliance on Shakspeare's dramatic perception, and truth to nature in all that he paints, whether manipulating minutely or only giving an apparently careless stroke. But I shall be able to produce the most satisfactory proof that this is the same lady, and that she is none other than the Cleopatra of the Elizabethan Court, Lady Penelope Rich!

When once we have discovered a speaker for these sonnets who is in every way a more befitting person than the Poet himself, and we couple with them the name of Lady Rich, a whole host of suggestions and illustrations start up to enforce the conjecture that she is the lady addressed; the object of this blind and frantic passion. Her coarser character in later life could not have been more exactly rendered than it is in these sonnets. They read like the plainest comments on the well-known facts of her career. In the year 1600 she had lost the Queen's favour, says the historian Camden, because she was more than suspected of being false to her husband's bed. And sonnets 142 and 152, written about the same time, contain the bluntest statement of this precise charge.

King James told Mountjoy that he had '*purchased a fair woman with a black soul.*' So the lover in these sonnets denounces the lady as having a heart black enough to be the devil's looking-glass, but full of fatal witchery herself. In sonnet 131 he says:—

> 'In nothing art thou black, save in thy deeds.'

And in sonnet 147—

> 'I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
> Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.'

The black eyes of Lady Rich were a subject of constant comment in her time, and frequently was their colour associated with another kind of blackness. It was divined that her startling combination of fair and dark was in some degree the outward symbol of her curious moral

mixture. There is a hint of this in a letter of the Earl of Nottingham, who, in writing to Lord Mountjoy, twits him respecting these same black eyes. He says, 'I think her Majesty would be most glad to see and look upon *your black eyes* here, so *she were sure you would not look with too much respect of other black eyes.*' 'But for that,' says the old gallant past sixty, 'if the Admiral (himself) were but thirty years old, I think he would not differ in opinion from the Lord Mountjoy.'[1] The lady of these sonnets is one in pride of spirit with her to whose power Essex paid unconscious tribute when he spoke of his sister's strength of mind and force of character, and proved his own miserable weakness: 'She must be looked to, for she has a *proud* spirit.' This was cowardly on the part of a brother, but he spoke the bitter truth of her who had been the master spirit of his intrigues with James of Scotland, and who helped to hurry on his own weakness until his folly met its fate.

Not only have we the nature, the age, the eyes, of Lady Rich accurately delineated, but sonnet 135 contains a play upon her name, and this occurs in a manner too remarkable for it to have been mere coincidence. The sonnet is an echo to one of Sidney's—his 37th, in which the name of '*Rich*' is played upon throughout:—

> 'Towards Aurora's Court a nymph doth dwell,
> *Rich* in all beauties which man's eye can see;
> Beauties so far from reach of words that we
> Abase her praise, saying she doth excel:
> *Rich* in the treasure of deserved renown,
> *Rich* in the riches of a royal heart,
> *Rich* in those gifts which give the eternal crown,
> Who, though most *Rich* in these and every part
> Which makes the patents of true earthly bliss,
> Hath no misfortune but that *Rich* she is.'

Shakspeare's 135th sonnet (the 8th here) is a manifest imitation of this:—

[1] Brewer, 14—18.

'Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy *will*,
And *will* to boot, and *will* in over-plus;
More than enough am I that vex thee still,
To thy sweet *will* making addition thus:
Wilt thou, whose *will* is large and spacious,
Not once vouchsafe to hide my *will* in thine?
Shall *will* in others seem right gracious,
And in my *will* no fair acceptance shine?
The sea, all water, yet receives rain still,
And in abundance addeth to his store;
So thou, being RICH in *will*, add to thy *will*
One *will* of mine, to make thy large *will* more:
Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill,
Think all but one, and me in that one *Will*.'

The point of this is that the speaker is '*Will*' by nam and the lady by nature; and the lover playfully propos to add the two '*Wills*' together; her *will*, or wilful tem per, is so large that it cannot be much if she will mak 'addition thus' to that '*sweet* will' of her own by addin him! In the next sonnet he pleads that, as she is so fon of having her *will*, she should make 'his name her love and *have* her will in the shape of him whose name i 'Will.' In this personification of *will* or wilfulness, w again meet the rival lady to whose high imperious '*will* the speaker in sonnet 133 (p. 209) is a prisoner, and i likewise features the wilful Lady Rich, the breakings-ou of whose will were perpetual, and dashed with the tru Cleopatra-like audacity.

Shakspeare's sonnet touches Sidney's most nearly in th eleventh line, which I contend names the object of both Here the secret is let out quite as palpably as the circum stances would permit. It tells the lady's name in a wa to make the mind conceive and the eye quicken, if no so emphatically as the speaker announces his own. Ther is an antithesis suggested which positively proves the in tention of playing upon the name of 'Rich' in necessar opposition to the name of 'Will.'

But there is still further proof of the truth of my interpretation.

Hitherto it has been assumed that the lady of these sonnets was a black-eyed, black-haired beauty, with a complexion of the swarthiest hue. This must result from her black eyes having unduly influenced the reader's imagination. In the old age, says the first of these sonnets, '*black* was not counted fair.' But the Poet is not speaking of women whose faces are black; when he says that black is now your only true beauty, he does not mean 'Blacks.' It is the lady's eyes, not her complexion, that is black. Her character may be black, but her countenance is not: she is neither a blackamoor nor a 'black beauty.'

Lady Rich did appear in one of the Court masques, called the '*Masque of Blackness*,' as an Ethiop beauty, with her hands, arms, and face blackened to the required tint, whilst her naked white feet dazzled the eyes as they dallied with a running stream; but this cannot be the complexion celebrated. Nor did it need Shakspeare to tell us that the negro complexion was not wont to be admired in the antique time. The subject touches in a most particular way the old poetic quarrel respecting the rival charms of black eyes and blue. In the old time the frank eye of bonny English blue, or good honest grey, bore away the palm as the favourite of our Poets. Black eyes were alien to the Northern ideal of beauty. But here is such a triumph of this colour that black is Beauty's only wear. Black eyes and black eyebrows, not a black face nor a dark complexion! It is the eyes alone that have *put on mourning*, and *become* 'pretty mourners.' Now, the eyes would not have *put on* mourning if the face had been very swarthy; the hair black; and it is the eyes alone that are '*so* suited' in mourning hue. There are two distinct excuses why the eyes should have assumed this mourning and *put on* this black; neither of which would have had a starting-point

if the lady had been altogether dark; then it would hav been her beauty that was dressed in the mourning-robe not her eyes and brows alone.

It will be seen that there is something very specia about these black eyes—in opposition to which some thing fair is required and implied, or where is the mo tive?—and when we have lifted the veil of myster through which they have glittered, and behind whic the face has been so long concealed, we shall, I think find that the supposed *dark* lady of Shakspeare's Sonnet is the famous golden-haired and black-eyed beaut Penelope Rich, the first love of Philip Sidney, the cousi of Elizabeth Vernon, the sister of Essex, the Helen of th Elizabethan poets.

She was 'a most triumphant lady, if report be squar to her,' whose lively blood ran blush-full of the summe in her veins. As wonderful a piece of work as eve Nature cunningly compounded, and her beauty was of th rarest kind known in the North. Sidney, who proclaime his love for her and his joy therein, 'tho' nations migh count it shame' and in the heavens set her starry name has left vivid Venetian paintings of her as the 'Stella of his Sonnets, the 'Philoclea' of his Arcadia—whereb the lady glows in the mind, warm with life once more She had hair of tawny gold, with tresses lustrous as thos of the Greek day-god. Sidney described them as beam of gold caught in a net. In complexion of face she wa nearly a brunette. Her Poet has exactly marked th colour of her cheek as a '*kindly claret*,' which is defi nite as the tint described by Dante as being 'less thai that of the rose, but more than that of the violets;' it i the ripe red that has the purple of peach-bloom in its dye and is only seen in the deep complexion—hardly eve found with golden hair.

> 'Of all complexions the culled sovereignty
> Did meet as at a fair in her fair cheek.'

And her eyes were black—'black stars,' Sidney calls them. Elsewhere they are twin-children of the Sun, begotten black in the fervour of his affection. So black were the eyes that those who have attempted to depict them seem to have felt, as they say of their very dark women in Angoulême, they were '*born when coal was in blossom.*' Sidney calls them eyes 'of touch,' that is, of black marble. This opposition of *blonde* and *brunette* was striking as is the rich gold and the gorgeous black of the humble-bee. Thus her beauty had the utmost contrast and chiaroscuro with which Nature paints the human face. Day, with its golden lights may be said to have dwelt in her hair: Night and starlight, in her eyes. The light above and the dark below—the fair hair with its Northern frankness of smile and the black burning eyes of the South glittering deadly-brilliant under black velvet eyebrows, with what Keats might have called their *ebon diamonding*, gave that piquancy of character to her appearance on which the poets loved to dwell.

An angel of light at the first glance: a 'precious visitant,' looking as though just stepped down from heaven, but with Proserpine-like eyes of such mystery you could not tell whether the indwelling divinity might not be an angel of darkness; could not get at the spirit in the black mask! And so she walked as a wonder among men, gathering hearts by impressment under the banner of her strange beauty, and winning such worship as falls to but few; one of those 'earth-treading stars,' as Shakspeare calls them, that come and light up our old world awhile, it may be, on their downward way from that pure heaven in which they will shine no more; one of the women who are just angels falling!

The poetry of Sidney is a good deal like a gorgeous Court dress of his time, seamed so stiffly with precious stones and pearls of price that it can almost stand alone, without being used for human wear. But to Lady Rich

it is indebted for its most life-like breathings of nature and its most visible beatings of a heart beneath. To her beauty we owe those delicious descriptions in which poetry grows divinely dainty, celebrating the outward graces of a woman and consecrating her physical charms. It was Stella's beauty, seen through Philoclea's transparent veil, that inspired some of the loveliest, most movingly delicate things ever said or sung of bodily beauty. This was Stella's hair—

> 'Her hair fine threads of finest gold
> In curléd knots man's thought to hold.'

These were Stella's eyes, the 'matchless pair of black stars'—

> 'Their arches be two heavenly lids
> Whose *wink* each bold attempt forbids.'

These were Stella's cheeks—

> 'Her cheeks with kindly claret spread,
> Aurora-like new out of bed.'

These were Stella's lips—

> 'But who those ruddy lips can miss,
> Which blesséd still themselves do kiss?'

These were Stella's pretty pearly ear-tips—

> 'The tip no jewel needs to wear;
> The tip is jewel to the ear.'

It was of Stella that Sidney said—

> 'Her shoulders be like two white Doves
> Perching!'

And of Stella's hand—

> 'Where whiteness doth for ever sit,
> And there with strange compact do lie
> Warm snow, moist pearl, soft ivory.'

And of her foot—

> 'In shew and scent, pale Violets
> Whose step on earth all beauty sets.'

And after recounting her outer perfections with the purity of a spirit whose warmest thoughts walk naturally in white, he tells how all this beauty is but

'the fair Inn
Of fairer guests which dwell within.'

There is a lovely description of the same lady weeping in the third book of the 'Arcadia.' 'Her tears came dropping down like rain in sunshine, and she, not taking heed to wipe the tears, they hung upon her cheeks and lips as upon cherries which the dropping tree bedeweth.' But the chief point of attraction now, as in her life-time, is the lady's eyes. It was the wonder of Sidney why, with such light hair and face so fair that the roses blushed and drooped half-dotingly, half-enviously to see the deeper bloom in her cheek, these eyes should have been so black! He asks did Nature make them so, like a cunning painter, on purpose to produce the utmost effect of light and shade!

'When Nature made her chief work, Stella's eyes,
In *colour black* why wrapt she beams so bright?
Would she in beamy black, like painter wise,
Frame daintiest lustre, mixed of shades and light?
Or did she, else, that sober hue devise,
In object best to knit and strength our sight,
Lest, if no veil those brave gleams did disguise,
They, sunlike, should more dazzle than delight?
Or, would she *her miraculous power show*,
That whereas black seems Beauty's contrary,
She even in black doth make all beauty flow,
Both so, and thus, she, minding Love should be
Placed ever there, gave him his *mourning* weed,
To honour all their deaths who for him bleed.'

These same *mourning* eyes are those of 'Philoclea,' and the Poet has the very thought in prose ('Arcadia' p. 95), 'Her *black eyes, black indeed*, whether *Nature so made them that we might be the more able to behold and bear*

their wonderful shining, or that she, goddess-like, would *work this miracle with herself, in giving blackness the price above all beauty*!' And these are the eyes of Penelope Rich, the 'only Philoclea!' The eyes that constituted the feature on which her singers always *settled* as they ranged over her beauties with the honeyed murmurs of bees busy in a world of flowers! And in their dark depths lies the unfathomed secret of these latter sonnets. Here are the *mourning* eyes, and the very miracle which Nature wrought in one particular person to set blackness above all beauty. Shakspeare adopts and expands the ingenious idea used twice by Sidney: he adds other reasons for the eyes appearing in mourning, but the elfin-bright black eyes are the same! In fact, suggestions from Sidney are the germ of these latter sonnets, just as with the earliest ones!

The lady of Sidney's description, then, is not a person of the ordinary dark and swarthy complexion, with hair of blue-black lustre, although he speaks of Nature setting *blackness above all beauty*; nor is the lady of Shakspeare's Sonnets; the blackness which he also celebrates as the only beauty is of the eyes, not of the face and hair. But the blackness of the eyes and the blackness of her character have blended to *dye* these sonnets and made the lady look dark indeed.

The opening sonnet is of necessity founded on such a contrast as was only to be met in the complexion of Lady Rich. The argument is that since the painting of faces and dyeing of hair have become so common, here, in this peculiar combination of black and fair, this triumph of Nature's most cunning workmanship is Beauty's only place of worship.

The fashion at Elizabeth's Court was to imitate the hair of the Queen. If the painter of an early portrait of her Majesty is to be trusted, her hair must have been of a ruddy gold, somewhat like the bark of the Scotch fir

seen in the glow of sunset. This natural hue was afterwards maintained by artifice. The practice of dyeing hair became as prevalent as it is to-day in Paris. The dead were robbed of their tresses, and, as we are told by Stubbes, ladies were accustomed to allure children into private places to snatch a grace from Nature by stealing their fair locks. Therefore, because of this,[1] 'my Mistress' eyes are raven black,' says the speaker, they have gone into mourning on this account, and so well does this black become them in spite of the implied contrast, that every tongue says 'Beauty should look so!'—should appear in this pattern which owes nothing to Art and cannot be imitated.

If these be the jetty eyes of Lady Rich, where then are the tresses of the Siren's own colour, the Mermaid's yellow, which the Poets so harped upon? Sonnet 130 says, 'if hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head;' but I have said enough to indicate that these sonnets are not to be fathomed by the careless, casual glance with which they have as yet been read. They have many covert meanings that have hitherto lurked privily. We must learn to read between the lines. They tell a secret history in cypher of which we have never before possessed the key. I repeat, the element of irony enters into their composition. In sonnet 138 it is irony in a smiling mood; in 96, it grows bitter, it jests with the lady's age—'some say thy fault is *youth*'—it pleads with her not to play the part of Wolf in Sheep's clothing—not to assume a lamb like innocence of look on purpose to lead the gazers astray.

> 'Do not so I love thee in *such* sort
> As thou, being mine, mine is thy *good* report.'

And this sonnet 130 is full of irony of the subtlest kind—that which makes its mock in smooth words of smiling

[1] Our Poet's disgust must have been very strong on the subject of these practices, frequent expressions of which escape both in the sonnets and plays. 'Excellently done, *if God did all*,' exclaims Viola at first sight of Olivia's unveiled beauty.

dissimulation—wins the ear of the person addressed with a low loving whisper, and makes her lean expectant of something sweet in her commendation, to find that the word of promise is craftily qualified—breathed to the ear and broken to the heart. This is what Puttenham calls giving the 'privy nippe,' the sly pinch of disparagement under the pretended fondling of praise; it is serving up the honey with a sting in it. 'There's no such sport as sport by sport o'erthrown,' says the Princess in 'Love's Labour's Lost;' and this is the sort of sport which the speaker here makes with the lady who has made sport of him, and pastime of his passion. He is showing that he can 'gleek upon occasion.' The intention of the sonnet is to decry and depreciate under an assumed guise of praise. No one can suppose, for example, if the lady's breasts were dun-coloured, that the fact was mentioned for the sake of flattery, or that the description of the breath *reeking* from her indicates any niceness of feeling! The apparent frankness of statement is not meant to please, but to take in and entrap the unwary seeker of flattery. It is a bit of malicious subtlety to call the lady's hair 'black wires,' which was so often be-sung as golden hair; and she had been so vain of its mellow splendour—so proud of its repute! The use of the word 'wires' points to this ironic reading, for the primary comparison of hair with 'wire' is when it is golden—the golden wire which was made when Apollo's lute was strung with his sunny hair. It is always golden wires that hair is likened to in our poetry. It is not the quality of the hair, not the *wiryness*, as we say, but the colour that is *meant to be decried*, and the expression is '*black wires*,' which, by implication, points to a far different colour. If it were necessary I might parry this expression with another which was made equally at random, and not meant to be a statement of fact—

'*In nothing art thou black*, save in thy deeds.'

But there is the '*if*' to be considered—'much virtue in

an "*if!*"'—'*If* hairs *be* wires,' says the speaker, 'black wires grow on her head.' So that the 'black' is only used conditionally, and the fact remains that 'hairs' are *not* 'wires.' The lady's hair was just as much *black* as her breasts were '*dun*,' and no more. It is the eyes alone that have *put on* black—that 'sweet black which *veils* her heavenly eye,' as Sidney describes it in his 20th sonnet. This is proved by sonnet 132, where the eyes only are in mourning, and the speaker says how well this mourning, which the eyes have put on, *becomes* her, in spite of the admitted incongruity, and he continues—

> 'O let it then as well beseem thy heart
> To mourn for me, since mourning doth thee grace,
> And *suit thy pity like in every part*!'

There is no mention of black hair or swarthy skin, but if she will do this and go into mourning altogether, then he will

> 'Swear Beauty herself is black,
> And all they foul that thy complexion lack.'

This 130th sonnet is not intended as a true description of the lady, but such a deprecation as shall serve to confess the speaker's fatuity, and mock a coquette's vanity.

Of course if Penelope Rich be the lady of these sonnets, she is not the Lady Rich of Sidney's love. Time and the turn of things have had their way. She is now getting on for forty, although one of those who never do feel forty. The lustres of youth have somewhat dimmed; the splendour of her beauty has been doubly tarnished. Besides, it is not the writer's cue to praise, the description is not intended to flatter. He never meant to laud the golden garniture of her sunshiny head—the 'yellow locks that shone so bright and long' in Spenser's verse, and glowed so in Sidney's eyes. (Moreover, I hold this 130th sonnet to be Herbert's and lacking Shakspeare's certainty of touch!) Her cheeks also are compared to the 'grey cheeks of the east,' and the 'sober west' in their faded paleness, having

lost the young red that used to flush up when the smile took its rosy rise from the cupid-cornered mouth, and spread over them in a soft auroral bloom, 'as of rose-leaves a little stirred' with the warm breath of Sidney's love. This is Lady Rich with the spring-freshness gone, the blushing graces withdrawn. Lady Rich in the remnant of her loveliness and refuse of her deeds! But changing as she is, there is all the old fire, and in her plainness she is proudly cruel as those who are in the first blush of their budding-time. And the black eyes remain imperial as of old in their infatuating charm; cunning as ever in the black art of their beauty—full of the old spells, with a power to haunt like the weird eyes of a dream. There is a reminder too of *Stella's* eyes in 'that full Star that ushers in the Even.'

The nature of Herbert's passion, and the deepening shadows of Lady Rich's character made it impossible, had he been so minded, for Shakspeare to laud her like Sidney had done, as '*that virtuous soul, sure heir of heavenly bliss*!' and '*rich in those gifts which give the eternal crown.*' Nor did he look on her through Sidney's eyes. He had seen and heard of her later gifts and graces. Yet, in spite of the touch of time, and the waste of a passionate life in her intense face—in spite of the descriptions which so tend to defeature the image set up by Sidney—we recognise the lady of the *mourning* eyes, the complexion beyond the reach of Art, whose blackness was above all other beauty, and know her by the original likeness that passes all likeness of imitation.

Apart from other evidence, there must be some particular meaning in Shakspeare's repeated description of the eyes having put on mourning, and the arguments being so perfectly those of Sidney, when the peculiarity was so singular, the complexion so rare and without rival as to constitute a title to fame, for the first portrait of Lady Rich, we must remember, appears in the work

that was written for William Herbert's mother, and it reappears in these sonnets written for the son. Besides which this dwelling upon a feature is so thoroughly opposed to Shakspeare's usual way of working. Except for a humorous purpose, as in the case of Bardolph's firebrand of a nose, and Falstaff's mountain of a belly, it is not his habit to make *featurely* remarks, or to map out his characters by any of their particular physical signs. We do not remember Shakspeare's men and women, as a rule, by their personal features. Not that the poet generalises them into vagueness, but the instinct of the Actor was alive to the fact that any stereotyped set of features would have interfered with the perfect pourtrayal in action. The girth of Falstaff is always a difficulty, because the idea which has been given to the spectators must be acted up to! And Shakspeare wisely abstained from giving his own set of faces and features, which must have left but little or no latitude in playing. He gives us the spirit of the character minutely finished, but leaves the physical face a good deal to the actor, and thus allows scope to the imagination, and a great possible variety of 'filling in'; this he does with so careless an air, but such cunning of hand, that he is gone before we have noted it! So that there must be some very uncommon cause for these repetitions of the 'mourning eyes,' and this frequent looking into their unfathomable darkness. For I shall show that these eyes haunted the imagination of Shakspeare as much as they did that of any other Elizabethan poet. There is nothing like it in the Southampton sonnets; no such dwelling on a particular feature. Therefore the explanation must be sought in the nature of the object, and there is sufficient internal evidence to show that in the present instance Shakspeare and Sidney both drew from one original, and that the one poet repeated the other's description because he was applying it to the same lady.

The sentiment in these sonnets of the eyes in mourning and of *black* being the sole beauty, together with the argument for the eyes and brows being black, when, according to the other parts, *they ought not to be so*, is only a repetition, curiously complete, from the play of 'Love's Labour's Lost.' It is there applied to 'Rosaline' by Lord Biron. Again the same mistake has occurred. Rosaline is *not* a dark lady in the ordinary sense. It is the remarkable complexion of Lady Rich once more. It is the peerless eyes of 'Stella' that have burned on Lord Biron and made his temperament all tinder to their sparks—'*Oh, but her eye!* by this light, *but for her eye*, I would not love her: yes, but for her two eyes'—the startling strangeness of her black eyes and eyebrows, under the tawny yellow hair, that excites the jesting comments of the merry mocking lords. The peculiarity of which they make fun is something beyond a dark skin: that would not explain the pleasant conceit which moves their mirth. Lord Biron only defends the lady's eyes and brows, on account of blackness, and Shakspeare would not have written in this manner had the case been simple as supposed.

'O, who can give an oath? where is a book?
That I may swear Beauty doth beauty lack,
If that she learn not of her eye to look:
No face is fair that is not full so black.
O, *if in black my lady's brow be decked*
It *mourns* that painting and usurping hair,
Should ravish doters with a false aspect,
And therefore is she *born to make black fair*,
Her favour turns *the fashion of these days*,
For native blood is counted painting now;
And therefore red that would avoid dispraise
Paints itself black to imitate her brow.'

It is the eyes and brows that are black, not the hair, nor the swarthiness of skin.

'No face is fair that is not full *so* black.'

It is the red eyebrow that was blackened to avoid dispraise, not the red head of hair. Now, as ruddy golden hair was the fashion of Elizabeth's days, if Rosaline's hair had been black, the others ought to have dyed their hair as well as their eyebrows. The statement carefully confines the comparison to the lady's eyes and brow. Evidently her hair was in fashion. The eyes and the brow alone *mourned* over the falsehood of other complexions, with which tricks were played artificially. The perfect contrast of her complexion was a trick of Nature's own; not to be approached by any cunningnesses of Art. Elsewhere Biron calls the lady

> 'A witty[1] wanton with a velvet brow,
> With two *pitch-balls* stuck in her face for eyes.'

The eyes are 'stuck in,' not as naturally belonging. The description is the same as that of the sonnets: 'Those two mourning eyes!' it is also one with Sidney's, and the sole meeting-place of all three is the person and complexion of Lady Rich. Biron's indication of Rosaline's character is also full of likeness. There is, moreover, the same personification of that WILL to which Elizabeth Vernon was '*mortgaged*;' the *Will* that is so punned upon.

> 'Biron. Is she wedded or no?
> Boyet. To her *will*, sir, or so.'

And another resemblance in colour. The King in the Play exclaims

> 'Black is the badge of hell,
> The hue of dungeons, and the *scowl*[2] of night.'

[1] I cannot think Shakspeare wrote a '*whitely* wanton;' he certainly could not in the sense of a sallow face or 'cheek of cream,' because Biron says:—

> 'Of all complexions the culled sovereignty
> Do meet as at a fair in her fair cheek,
> Where several worthies make one dignity,
> Where nothing wants that Want itself doth seek.'

[2] Here, I think, my interpretation will determine a disputed reading. The king is decrying those brows which have *put on blackness* as the night

The lady of the sonnets is called

'As black as hell, as dark as night.'

This repetition in the latter sonnets from an early play is the most remarkable in all Shakspeare's writings, and it reverses his usual custom, which is to repeat in the play, from the sonnet whenever he quotes himself. The only satisfactory solution is that the description was written and repeated for the same person, and all the evidence concurs, all the points converge in the inevitable conclusion that this was Lady Rich. There was but one Lady Rich; a woman who had no living likeness, and her ladyship is the only possible '*she*' of these descriptions which are not presentments of an ordinary dark complexion, but of a complexion that was the most extraordinary.

Thus we have Penelope Rich identified as the lady of the latter sonnets, by the portrait which Sidney drew and Shakspeare copied. She is identified as the cousin of Elizabeth Vernon—the 'Lascivious Grace' that intrigued for purposes amatory and political—the witch-woman who had strange cunning in quickening men's pulses—the tyrant in her capricious power of plaguing. We have her identified by the very facts of her married life, her age in contrast with Herbert's youth, her ill deeds and darkening reputation; by the mysterious union of opposites in her complexion—the 'light condition in a beauty dark,' and by the starry immortality of her strange black eyes; in short, we have the Lady Rich, in feature, and in fame; the Lady Rich by nature, and by name.

The Historian Clarendon, in his portrait of the Earl of Pembroke, makes a statement very much akin to my reading of these latter sonnets as spoken by William Herbert to Lady Rich. He remarks 'the Earl was immoderately given up to women. But, therein he likewise

puts on its scowl. In the king's eyes the black brows are repulsive, on account of the contrast implied, and he likens their colour to the scowl on the brow of Night.

retained such a power and jurisdiction over his appetite that he was not so much transported with beauty and outward allurements as with those advantages of the mind, as manifested an extraordinary wit, and spirit, and knowledge, and administered great pleasure in the conversation. To these he sacrificed himself, his precious time, and much of his fortune; *and some, who were nearest his trust and friendship*, were not without apprehension that his natural vivacity and vigour of mind began to lessen and decline by those excessive indulgences.' This is the exact *replica* of the character and taste of Shakspeare's speaker. It is a perfect parallel to the 141st sonnet. Throughout the sonnets, the speaker keeps saying it is not the outward allurements of the lady's loveliness, that hold his foolish heart captive: not her hair, nor her complexion, nor her face—these have not sufficient beauty to account for his subserviency. The eyes, of course, have their charm; they are the windows from whence looks a spirit wonderful in wit and wantoness, and in its ripest age of power; the potent spirit that by word or look can bind him fast in strong invisible toils. He protests he is not the slave of his senses, but that neither senses nor wits can dissuade him from loving her. Then, if the character of the speaker in these sonnets is true to the one portrayed by Clarendon, the character of the Earl's 'particular vanities' is precisely that of the lady here addressed and of the Lady Rich, about the year 1600. The glosses of her youth were going; the flower had shed its purest perfume; those that once 'kneeled to the rose-bud' might 'stop their noses' against the rose over-blown. But, her magic in working on the heart, and flinging a glamour over the eyes of a youth, must have attained its supremest subtlety. She had a keen wit; was sprightly in conversation, and could say things full of salt and sparkle as a wave of the sea. Her hardened feelings had taken a diamond-like point.

Her natural simplicities of the early time were now craftily turned into conscious art. Practice had made her perfect in the use of those conquering eyes when they took aim with their deadly level in the dark. She was mistress of a combination of forces most fatal to a young and fervent admirer; knew well how to feed his flame, and could turn her own years into a maturer charm for his youth. And as the Herbert of Clarendon's portrait is one in character with the speaker of these sonnets, and as the lady of the sonnets is the fittest of types for the females quoted by the Historian as being so victorious over the Earl, it is but reasonable to suppose that Lady Rich may have sat for Clarendon's description as well as for Shakspeare's. The Poet would not be the only person conversant with the Earl's passion for this lady. The knowledge would be extant, the fact would still live on in the memory of Clarendon's older friends—one or more of whom may have been the very friends of Herbert referred to—when he wrote his history. It is obvious that he had in mind particular instances from which he generalised his description, and it is certain that no more perfect illustration of his meaning could have existed than in the person and character of Lady Rich.

DRAMATIC SONNETS.

1599—1600.

WILLIAM HERBERT'S PASSION FOR LADY RICH.

In the old age black was not counted fair,
Or if it were, it bore not Beauty's name;
But now is black Beauty's successive heir,
And Beauty slandered with a bastard shame:
For since each hand hath put on Nature's power,
Fairing the foul with Art's false-borrowed face,
Sweet Beauty hath no name, no holy hour,[1]
But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace:
Therefore my Mistress' eyes[2] are raven black,
Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem
At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,
Slandering creation with a false esteem:
Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,
That every tongue says, 'Beauty should look so!'

(127.)

[1] 'No holy *hour*. The Quarto reads 'bower.' Malone made the alteration, which is very happy. The idea is of the hour of worship: this is shown by the '*profaned*' of the next line. Also see sonnet 68:—

'In him those holy antique hours (of beauty) are seen.'

[2] 'My mistress' eyes,' These eyes are so dwelt upon, and the lady's hair is so obviously omitted as to suggest a something quite unaccountable. Walker fancied the 'eyes' of this line might have been a misprint for 'hairs.' The editors of the 'Globe' and 'Gem' editions, acting on this hint, have taken a leap in the dark, and printed 'brows.' By 'her eyes *so* suited,' Shakspeare did not mean *also*, but her eyes *thus* dressed in black. A repetition which lays a double stress upon the eyes.

Thine eyes I love, and they, as pitying me,
Knowing thy heart torments me with disdain,
Have put on black, and loving mourners be,
Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain:
And truly not the morning sun of heaven
Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,
Nor that full star that ushers in the even
Doth half that glory to the sober west,
As those two mourning eyes become thy face:[1]
O, let it then as well beseem thy heart
To mourn for me, since mourning doth thee grace,
And suit thy pity like in every part:
Then will I swear Beauty herself is black,
And all they foul that thy complexion lack. (132.)

How oft when thou, my Music, music playést
Upon that blesséd wood whose motion sounds
With thy sweet fingers, when thou gently swayést
The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,
Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,
Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest reap,
At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand!
To be so tickled, they would change their state
And situation with those dancing chips,
O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,
Making dead wood more blest than living lips:
Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,
Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.[2] (128.)

When my Love swears that she is made of truth
I do believe her, tho' I know she lies;
That she might think me some untutored youth,
Unlearnéd in the world's false subtleties!

[1] So in the 'Taming of the Shrew:'—

'What stars do spangle heaven with such beauty
As those two eyes become that heavenly face?'

[2] This is the only sonnet about which I have any lasting misgivings. I think it may be one of the Southampton series. To me it mirrors the face of Mistress Vernon rather than that of her cousin. But as it does not necessarily belong to any one of the stories, and as I wish to alter no more than I am compelled, I have left it with Herbert's sonnets.

Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Altho' she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue:
On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed:
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love loves not to have years told:
Therefore I lie with her and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flattered be.[1]

(138.)

My Mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red:
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head:
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my Mistress reeks.[2]

[1] In the 'Passionate Pilgrim,' this sonnet reads thus:—

When my Love swears that she is made of truth,
I do believe her, though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutored youth,
Unskilfull in the world's false *forgeries*:
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although *I know* my *years be* past the best,
I smiling credit her false-speaking tongue,
Out-facing faults in love with love's ill rest:
But wherefore says *my Love that* she is *young*?
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
O, love's best habit is *a soothing tongue*,
And age in love loves not to have years told:
Therefore I'll lie with *love*, and *love* with me,
Since that our faults *in love thus smothered be.*

[2] 'The breath that from my Mistress *reeks*.' This expression is very gross to apply to a lady's breath. When Shakspeare makes use of it as 'reek,' 'reeky,' or 'reechy,' it is meant to be repulsive, and conveys a coarse idea, as in Hamlet's description of the King's dalliance with his mother, and Juliet's shrinking from the bones in the sepulchre. Here it would have been strong enough if the lady *had* been a Black.

I love to hear her speak,—yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a Goddess go,—
My Mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
And yet, by heaven, I think my Love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

(130.)

Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art,
As those whose beauties proudly make them cruel:
For well thou know'st, to my dear-doting heart
Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel!
Yet, in good faith, some say that thee behold,
Thy face hath not the power to make love groan;
To say they err, I dare not be so bold,
Altho' I swear it to myself alone:
And, to be sure that is not false I swear,
A thousand groans—but thinking on thy face—
One on another's neck, do witness bear
Thy black is fairest in my judgement's place!
In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds,
And thence this slander, as I think, proceeds.

(131.)

Some say thy fault is youth, some wantonness,
Some say thy grace is youth and gentle sport;
Both grace and faults are loved of more and less;
Thou mak'st faults graces that to thee resort!
As on the finger of a thronéd Queen
The basest jewel will be well-esteemed,
So are those errors that in thee are seen
To truths translated and for true things deemed:
How many lambs might the stern Wolf betray,
If like a lamb he could his looks translate!
How many gazers might'st thou lead away
If thou would'st use the strength of all thy state!
'*But do not so: I love thee in such sort,*
As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.'[1]

(96.)

[1] The sonnets are so essentially self-contained in subject, so limited in the range of their reference to matters concerning the private friends, that we

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy Will!
And Will to boot, and Will in overplus:
More than enough am I that vex thee still,
To thy sweet Will making addition thus:
Wilt thou, whose Will is large and spacious,
Not once vouchsafe to hide my '*Will*' in thine?
Shall Will in others seem right gracious,
And in my '*Will*' no fair acceptance shine?
The sea, all water, yet receives rain still
And in abundance addeth to his store;
So thou being RICH in Will, add to thy Will
One 'Will' of mine, to make thy large Will more:
Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill;
Think all but one, and me in that one 'WILL.'[1]
(135.)

If thy soul check thee that I come so near,
Swear to thy blind soul that I was thy '*Will*,'
And Will, thy soul knows, is admitted there!
Thus far, for love, my lovesuit, Sweet! fulfil:

have but a small circle to traverse for the purpose of identification, whether of person or circumstance. Thus we may conclude that the past love-quarrel and its consequent 'night of woe' referred to by Southampton in sonnet 120, is the same as we saw taking place in 'Elizabeth Vernon's Jealousy;' that being the very reason why it was referred to! So of the gift-book which has been parted with in sonnet 122. It is the same as Shakspeare was about to write in in sonnet 38; the same as he was writing in when he composed sonnet 77, and that again is the reason why a sonnet is devoted to its being given away. So of the lady of these latter sonnets, whose wanton graces have 'such becoming of things ill.' She is here written of because she was the siren addressed in the earlier ones as that 'Lascivious Grace in whom all ill well shows!' Following this clue, I must believe that these lines were repeated to one who was acquainted with them in the Southampton sonnets, for therein lies the very point of their sting, and I can discover no other motive for the repetition. But, then, Shakspeare could not have repeated his own well-known lines for the purpose of scathing Lady Rich with scorn! I see no other feasible or possible conclusion than that Herbert repeated two of Shakspeare's lines in a sonnet of his own, because the lady was already familiar with them.

[1] The lady's Will is a personification of her wilfulness; the speaker's 'Will' is his name; these I have tried to distinguish. His plea is that the lady should love his 'Will'—himself—rather than hers, and have his 'Will' instead of her own, by making *him her* 'Will.'

Will will fulfil the treasure of thy love,
Ay, fill it full with Wills, and my 'Will' one:
In things of great receipt with ease we prove
Among a number one is reckoned none:
Then in the number let me pass untold,
Tho' in thy store's account I one must be,
For nothing hold me, so it please thee hold
That nothing me, a something, Sweet! to thee:
Make but my name thy love, and love that still,
And then thou lov'st me, for my name is '*Will.*'

(136.)

Love is my sin and thy dear virtue hate!
Hate of my sin, grounded on sinful loving:
O, but with mine compare thou thine own state,
And thou shalt find it merits not reproving;
Or, if it do, not from those lips of thine,
That have profaned their scarlet ornaments
And sealed false bonds of love as oft as mine;
Robbed others' beds' revenues of their rents:
Be it lawful I love thee, as thou lov'st those
Whom thine eyes woo as mine importune thee:
Root pity in thy heart, that when it grows
Thy pity may deserve to pitied be:
If thou dost seek to have what thou dost hide,
By self-example mayest thou be denied!

(142.)

Lo! as a careful housewife runs to catch
One of her feathered creatures broke away,
Sets down her babe and makes all swift despatch
In pursuit of the thing she would have stay,
Whilst her neglected child holds her in chace,
Cries to catch her whose busy care is bent
To follow that which flies before her face,
Not prizing her poor infant's discontent;
So runn'st thou after that which flies from thee,
Whilst I, thy babe, chase thee afar behind:
But if thou catch thy hope, turn back to me,
And play the Mother's part, kiss me, be kind!
So will I pray that thou may'st have thy 'WILL,'
If thou turn back, and my loud crying still.

(143.)

Being your slave, what should I do but tend
Upon the hours and times of your desire?
I have no precious time at all to spend,
Nor services to do, till you require!
Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour,
Whilst I, my Sovereign, watch the clock for you,
Nor think the bitterness of absence sour
When you have bid your Servant[1] once adieu:
Nor dare I question with my jealous thought
Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,
But, like a sad slave, stay and think of nought
Save, where you are how happy you make those:
So true a fool is love that, in your 'WILL,'[2]
Tho' you do anything, he thinks no ill.

(57.)

That god forbid that made me first your slave,
I should in thought control your times of pleasure;
Or at your hand the account of hours to crave,
Being your vassal bound to stay your leisure!
O let me suffer, being at your beck,
The imprisoned absence of your liberty;
And patience, tame to sufferance, bide each check
Without accusing you of injury!
Be where you list, your charter is so strong
That you yourself may privilege your time;
Do what you will; to you it doth belong
Yourself to pardon of self-doing crime!
I am to wait, tho' waiting so be hell:
Not blame your pleasure, be it ill or well.[3]

(58.)

[1] '*Your Servant.*' 'Servant' implied the 'Mistress' in the gallantry of the time. In the 'Two Gentlemen of Verona' (act ii., sc. 4), Mistress and Servant occur three times over in eight lines. In other sonnets the 'Mistress' is spoken of, and in this the relationship of the *Cavalier Servente* is described with marked emphasis.

[2] '*Will.*' This 'Will,' which links sonnet 57 to the Herbert series, has been quite lost sight of ever since the Book of Sonnets was first printed. See remarks in a later chapter.

[3] Here is the obverse side of this Coin of Character, with the lady's features stamped upon it large as life! According to my interpretation it is the person addressed in these sonnets, the Lady Rich, who, as Rosaline,

O, call me not to justify the wrong
That thy unkindness lays upon my heart;
Wound me not with thine eye, but with thy tongue;
Use power with power and slay me not by art:
Tell me thou lov'st elsewhere, but in my sight
Dear heart! forbear to glance thine eye aside:
What need'st thou wound with cunning, when thy might
Is more than my o'erpressed defence can bide?
Let me excuse thee: ah! my Love well knows
Her pretty looks have been my enemies;
And therefore from my face she turns my foes,
That they elsewhere might dart their injuries:
Yet do not so; but since I am near slain,
Kill me outright with looks and rid my pain.

(139.)

Be wise as thou art cruel! do not press
My tongue-tied patience with too much disdain;
Lest Sorrow lend me words, and words express
The manner of my pity-wanting pain:
If I might teach thee wit, better it were,
Tho' not to love, yet, Love, to tell me so;

thus threatens that treatment and torture which Herbert acknowledges in the beautiful tyrant's own words, and humbly accepts in very deed.

'*How I would make him fawn, and beg, and seek,*
And wait the season, and *observe the times,*
And spend his prodigal wits in bootless rhymes,
And *shape his service wholly to my hests,*
And *make him proud to make me proud,* that jests!
So potently[a] would I o'ersway his state
That *he should be my fool,* and *I his fate.*'

Love's Labour's Lost, act v., sc. 2.

[a] I elect to use this word in place of the '*perttaunt like,*' or '*pertaunt like,*' of Quarto and Folio. It may have been 'potent like,' meaning like a potentate; but I more than doubt if Shakspeare arrested his thought mid-swing, lamed his expression, and checked the coming climax of the lines by a simile conveyed in that way. Neither do I think the Poet wrote 'you equal potents' in 'King John,' but 'you equal-potent, fiery-kindled spirits,' as he used 'subtle-potent' in 'Troilus and Cressida.' 'Potently' points the emphasis on the 'so' with far more simple force. The whole word was bungled by the printers, who would find it equally easy to make the '*lie*' into 'like,' as to convert '*potent*' into 'perttaunt.' That it was not 'portent-like,' may be gathered from a line in 'Coriolanus:'—

'Arriving,
A place of potency, and sway o' the state.'

Thus read and illustrated, the lines quoted prove the '*changeful potency*' of 'Troilus and Cressida' (act ii., sc. 2) to be the right lection.

As testy sick men, when their deaths be near,
No news but health from their Physicians know;
For if I should despair, I should grow mad,
And in my madness might speak ill of thee:
Now this ill-wresting world is grown so bad,
Mad slanderers by mad ears believéd be:
That I may not be so, nor thou belied,
Bear thine eyes straight, tho' thy proud heart go wide.
(140.)

Cans't thou, O cruel! say I love thee not,
When I against myself with thee partake?
Do I not think on thee when I forgot
Am of myself, all tyrant for thy sake?
Who hateth thee that I do call my friend?
On whom frown'st thou that I do fawn upon?
Nay, if thou lower'st on me, do I not spend
Revenge upon myself with present moan?
What merit do I in myself respect,
That is so proud thy service to despise,
When all my best doth worship thy defect,
Commanded by the motion of thine eyes?
But Love, hate on, for now I know thy mind;
Those that can see thou lov'st, and I am blind.
(149.)

Thou blind fool, love, what dost thou to mine eyes,
That they behold, and see not what they see?
They know what beauty is, see where it lies,
Yet what the best is take the worst to be:
If eyes, corrupt by over-partial looks,
Be anchored in the bay where all men ride,
Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forgéd hooks,
Whereto the judgement of my heart is tied?
Why should my heart think that a several plot,
Which my heart knows the wide world's common place?
Or mine eyes seeing this, say this is not,
To put fair truth upon so foul a face?
In things right true my heart and eyes have erred,
And to this false plague are they now transferred.
(137.)

O me! what eyes hath love put in my head,
Which have no correspondence with true sight?
Or if they have, where is my judgement fled,
That censures falsely what they see aright?
If that be fair whereon my false eyes dote,
What means the world to say it is not so?
If it be not, then love doth well denote,
Love's eye is not so true as all men's![1] no,
How can it? O, how can love's eye be true,
That is so vext with watching and with tears?
No marvel then, tho' I mistake my view;
The sun itself sees not till heaven clears:
O cunning Love! with tears thou keep'st me blind,
Lest eyes well-seeing thy foul faults should find!
(148.)

In faith I do not love thee with mine eyes,
For they in thee a thousand errors note;
But tis my heart that loves what they despise,
Who in despite of view is pleased to dote:
Nor are my ears with thy tongue's tune delighted;
Nor tender feeling to base touches prone,
Nor taste, nor smell, desire to be invited
To any sensual feast with thee alone:
But my five wits, nor my five senses can
Dissuade one foolish heart from serving thee,
Who leaves, unswayed, the likeness of a man,
Thy proud heart's slave and vassal-wretch to be:
Only my plague thus far I count my gain,
That she that makes me sin awards me pain.
(141.)

[1] 'Love's eye is not so true as all men's.' It has been suggested by the Editor of 'Walker's Examination,' that a pun was intended in this line on the 'eye' and I, *i.e.* 'ay.' And the editors of the 'Globe' and 'Gem' editions have adopted it, and read 'Love's "eye" is not so true as all men's "No."' But I cannot bring myself to believe that Shakspeare thus snapped the continuity and maimed the sense to catch at a quibbling sound. His point is that the eye of one cannot see so truly as the eye of all men, and this is lost if we accept the pun and alter the punctuation. Singleness of expression is absolutely demanded by the nature of the thought, and for the carrying on of the argument. Shakspeare did not make all the puns that were possible to him.

O, from what power has thou this powerful might
With insufficiency my heart to sway?
To make me give the lie to my true sight,
And swear that brightness doth not grace the day?
Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,
That in the very refuse of thy deeds
There is such strength and warrantise of skill
That, in my mind, thy worst all best exceeds?
Who taught thee how to make me love thee more
The more I hear and see just cause of hate?
O, tho' I love what others do abhor,
With others thou should'st not abhor my state!
If thy unworthiness raised love in me,
More worthy I to be beloved of thee.

(150.)

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease;
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
The uncertain sickly appetite to please:
My Reason, the Physician to my love,
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve
Desire is death, which Physic did except:
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,
And frantic-mad with evermore unrest;
My thoughts and my discourse, as madmen's, are
At random from the truth vainly expressed;
For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

(147.)

In loving thee thou know'st I am forsworn,
But thou art twice forsworn, to me love swearing,
In act thy bed-vow broke and new faith torn
In vowing new hate after new love bearing:
But why of two oaths' breach do I accuse thee,
When I break twenty? I am perjured most;
For all my vows are oaths but to misuse thee,
And all my honest faith in thee is lost:

For I have sworn deep oaths of thy deep kindness,
Oaths of thy love, thy truth, thy constancy;
And, to enlighten thee, gave eyes to blindness,
Or made them swear against the thing they see;
For I have sworn thee fair; more perjured I,
To swear, against the truth, so foul a lie.

(152.)

Love is too young to know what conscience is!
Yet who knows not, conscience is born of love?
Then, gentle cheater, urge not my amiss,
Lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove:
For thou betraying me, I do betray
My nobler part to my gross body's treason;
My soul doth tell my body that he may
Triumph in love; flesh stays no farther reason;
But rising at thy name, doth point out thee
As his triumphant prize: proud of this pride
He is contented thy poor drudge to be,
To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side:
No want of conscience hold it that I call
Her—Love! for whose dear love I rise and fall.

(151.)

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action; and till action, lust
Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;
Enjoyed no sooner but despiséd straight,
Past reason hunted, and no sooner had
Past reason hated, as a swallowed bait
On purpose laid to make the taker mad:
Mad in pursuit and in possession so:
Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;
A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe;
Before, a joy proposed! behind, a dream!
All this the world well knows, yet none knows well
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

(129.)

Poor Soul, the centre of my sinful earth,—
My sinful earth these rebel powers array—
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly-gay?
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? is this thy body's end?
Then, Soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross:
Within be fed, without be rich no more!
So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on Men,
And Death once dead there's no more dying then.[1]

(146.)

[1] The first two lines of this sonnet in the Quarto read—

'Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
My sinful earth these *rebel powers that thee array.*'

There being two syllables too many in the second line, Malone thought the printers had inadvertently repeated 'my sinful earth,' and proposed to read,

'*Fooled* by these rebel powers that thee array.'

Steevens would read, '*Starved* by the rebel powers.' It has been suggested that we should read, 'Foiled by these rebel powers.' Also, '*Slave* to these rebel powers, &c.' I have simply taken out two superfluous words, which the printers stuck in, and the result is perfect sense, without losing the added touch of solemnity that is given, and obviously intended, by the repetition of '*my sinful earth.*' The sonnet is in Shakspeare's largest, simplest style, and he would not have cramped his second line by such an expression as 'that thee array.' Not only would not, *he could not*, for there is no '*thee*' to address in this line. These '*rebel powers*' do not *array* the soul; they are of the flesh; they array his sinful earth. 'Array,' here, does not only mean dress, I think it also signifies that in the flesh these rebel powers set their battle in array against the soul.

LADY PENELOPE RICH.

PENELOPE Devereux was a daughter of one of those proud old English houses, whose descendants love to dwell on the fact that they came in with the Norman Conquest. The progenitor of the English branch of the Devereux' bore high rank in Normandy before he carved out a larger space for himself on English soil at the battle of Hastings as one of Duke William's fighting men. He became the founder of an illustrious House that was destined to match four times with the royal Plantagenets, and to be enriched with the blood and inherit the honours of the Bohuns and Fitzpierces, Mandevilles and Bouchiers. On the father's side, Penelope Devereux descended from Edward III., and her mother, Lettice Knollys, was cousin, once removed, to Queen Elizabeth. Thus a dash of blood doubly-royal ran in her veins, and in her own personal beauty this noble sap of the family tree appears by all report to have put forth a worthy blossom.

Her father was that good Earl Walter whom Elizabeth called 'a rare jewel of her realm and an ornament of her nobility,' whose character was altogether of a loftier kind than that of his more famous son Robert, the royal Favourite. His story is one of the most touching—he having, as it was suspected, had to change worlds in order that Leicester might change women.

Penelope was four years older than her brother Robert.

She was born at Chartley in 1563. Very little is known of her childhood. She was but thirteen years of age, the oldest of five children, at the time of her father's early death, and the bitterest pang felt by the brave and gentle Earl was caused at his parting from the little ones that were being left so young when they so much needed his fatherly forethought and protecting care.

There are few stories more pathetic than that told of this Earl's bearing on his death-bed, by the faithful pen of some affectionate soul, said to have been one of his two chaplains, Thomas Knell by name. He suffered terribly and was grievously tormented, says the narrator, for the space of twenty-two days. He was dying far from his poor children, who were about to be left fatherless, with almost worse than no mother. He may have had a dark thought that he had been sent away by one of his enemy's cunning Court-tricks to be stricken and to die—'nothing was omitted,' says Camden, 'whereby to break his mild spirit with continual crosses one in the neck of another'—that Leicester was secretly taking his life preliminary to the taking of his wife; but he bore his affliction with a most valiant mind, and, 'although he felt intolerable pain, yet he had so cheerful and noble a countenance that he seemed to suffer none at all, or very little,' nor did he murmur through all the time and all the torture. He is described as speaking 'more like a divine preacher and heavenly prophet' than a mortal man, lying or kneeling with a light soft as the light of a mother's blessing, smiling down from her place in heaven, on his fine face, which was moulded by Nature in her noblest mood, and finished by suffering with its keenest chisel. 'What he spoke,' says the narrator, 'brake our very hearts, and forced out abundant tears, partly for joy of his godly mind, partly for the doctrine and comfort we had of his words. But, chiefly I blurred the paper with tears as I writ.' His only care in worldly matters was for his children, to

whom often he commended his love and blessing, and yielded many times, even with great sighs, most devout prayers to God that he would bless them and give them his grace to fear him. For his daughters also he prayed, lamenting the time, which is so vain and ungodly, as he said, considering the frailness of women, lest they should learn of the vile world. He never seemed to sorrow but for his children. 'Oh, my poor children,' often would he say, 'God bless you, and give you his grace.' Many times begging mercy at the hands of God, and forgiveness of his sins, he cried out unto God, 'Lord forgive me, and forgive all the world, Lord, from the bottom of my heart, from the bottom of my heart, even all the injuries and wrongs, Lord, that any have done unto me. Lord, forgive them, as I forgive them from the bottom of my heart.' He was anxious that Philip Sidney should marry his daughter Penelope, and in feeling he bequeathed her to him. Speaking of Sidney, two nights before he died he said, 'Oh, that good gentleman! have me commended unto him, and tell him I send him nothing, but I wish him well, and so well that if God so move both their hearts, I wish that he might match with my daughter. I call him son. He is wise, virtuous and godly; and if he go on in the course he hath begun, he will be as famous and worthy a gentleman as England ever bred.' Two days before his death he wrote his last letter to the Queen, in which he humbly commits his poor children to her Majesty, and her Majesty to the keeping of God. 'My humble suit must yet extend itself further into many branches, for the behoof of my poor children, that since God doth now make them fatherless, yet it will please your Majesty to be a mother unto them, at the least by your gracious countenance and care of their education, and their matches.' The night before he died 'he called William Hewes, which was his musician, to play upon the virginals and to sing. Play, said he, my song, Will Hewes,

and I will sing it myself. So he did it most joyfully, not as the howling swan, which, still looking down, waileth her end, but as a sweet lark, lifting up his hands and casting up his eyes to his God, with this mounted the crystal skies and reached with his unwearied tongue the top of the highest heavens. Who could have heard and seen this violent conflict, having not a stonied heart, without innumerable tears and watery plaints?' Unhappily, the dying father's wish on the subject of his daughter's marriage was not to be fulfilled. Waterhouse, in his letter to Sir H. Sidney,[1] unconsciously uttered a prophecy when he said, 'Truly, my lord, I must say to your lordship, as I have said to my Lord of Leicester and Mr. Philip, the breaking off from this match will turn to more dishonour than can be repaired with any other marriage in England!' The marriage did not take place, and in many ways the predicted dishonour came.

It has been conjectured that Sidney alluded to Lady Penelope in a letter to his friend, Languet, who, in the course of their correspondence, had exhorted him to marry. He says, 'Respecting her of whom I readily acknowledge how unworthy I am, I have written you my reasons long since, briefly indeed, but yet as well as I was able.'[2] If Sidney spoke of Lady Penelope Devereux in this letter, his reasons for not marrying just then may have been that he thought her too young at that time, for she was but fifteen years old, the date of his letter being March 1578. In his 33rd sonnet he reproaches himself for not being able to see by the 'rising moon' what a 'fair day' was about to unfold. It is not probable that the two lovers were already apart three years before the lady's marriage with Lord Rich. The time came, however, when, from some fatal cause or other, they were sundered, although there

[1] *Sydney Memoirs*, i. 147.

[2] Correspondence of Sidney and Languet, translated by S. A. Pears, 1845: p. 144.

is proof that they had been drawn together by very tender ties.

Lady Penelope Devereux in her eighteenth year, had bloomed into such a rose of beauty, as would have found (we like to think,) a fit nestling place for giving forth its sweetness in the bosom of Philip Sidney! And it seems one of those sad inevitable things which make so much of the tragedy of the human lot, that these two should not have come together. If they had married, how different it all might have been!

Heylin describes Penelope Devereux as being 'a lady in whom lodged all attractive graces of beauty, wit, and sweetness of behaviour, which might render her the absolute mistress of all eyes and hearts.' What Sidney was, the world has gathered from the glimpse we get of him, in his brief beautiful life, and saintly death. In his nature, humanity nearly touched the summit of its nobleness. And, from him, Penelope was taken to be given to a man whose character as nearly sounded the depths of human baseness. Thus the radiance of her tender romance died out, and the hues of love's young dawn all faded into the light of common day!

Sidney has told the story of his love for Lady Rich under the title of 'Astrophel and Stella,' in 108 sonnets, which were first printed in quarto, 1591. He asks us to listen to him, because he must unfold a riddle of his own life. It was of this personal passion of his, that the Muse said to him: '*Fool! look in thy heart and write.*' The object of his writing, he tells us, was that the 'dear she,' whom he had lost for ever through her marriage with Lord Rich, might 'take some pleasure of his pain;' a sentiment that springs straight from the deepest root of the feeling of which it has been said, 'All other pleasures are not worth its pains!'

We have seen something of Penelope Devereux's personal graces as pictured by her lover in the 'Arcadia.'

In these sonnets he again describes her as having 'black eyes,' and 'golden hair,' and he dwells much upon those 'black stars,' and 'black beams' of her eyes. He illustrates the peculiarity of her complexion, and the 'kindly claret' of her cheek, by a story. The 22nd sonnet relates how on a hot summer's day he met '*Stella*' with some other fair ladies. They were on horse-back, with a burning sun in the cloudless blue. The other ladies were compelled to shade their faces with their fans to preserve their fairness; 'Stella' alone rode with her beauty bare, and she the daintiest of all, went openly free from harm, whilst the 'hid and meaner beauties,' were parched.

'The cause was this;
The Sun which others burned, did her but kiss.'

It is of Lady Rich that Sidney speaks, when in sonnet 39, he makes his enchanting promise to Sleep, in that most charming of invocations.—

'O make in me these civil wars to cease!
I will good tribute pay if thou do so;
Take thou of me, sweet pillows, sweetest bed;
A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light;
A rosy garland and a weary head:
And if these things, as being thine by right,
Move not thy heavy grace, *thou shalt in me,*
Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see!'

Not only is she 'rich in all beauties' that man's eye can look on, but she is likewise,—

'Rich in the treasure of deserved renown;
Rich in the riches of a royal heart;
Rich in those gifts which give the Eternal Crown;
Who, tho' most Rich in these and every part
Which make the patents of true earthly bliss,
Hath no misfortune, but, that *Rich* she is.'

This lady so rich by nature is cursed in being *Rich* by

name. The 33rd sonnet appears to tell us how the Poet lost her.—

'I might, unhappy word! O me! I might,
And then would not, or could not see my bliss;
Till now, wrapt in a most infernal night,
I find how heavenly day, Wretch! I did miss.
Heart! rend thyself, thou dost thyself but right;
No lovely Paris made thy Helen his!
No force, no fraud, robbed thee of thy delight,
Nor Fortune of thy fortune author is:
But to myself, myself did give the blow,
While too much wit (forsooth)! so troubled me,
That I respects *for both our sakes* must show:
And yet could not, by rising Morn foresee
How fair a day was near! O punished eyes!
That I had been more foolish, or more wise.'

He might have called her his own, but he must needs show his wisdom by waiting a little longer. He was troubled in the matter with too many thoughts, and too much wit forsooth. He stood upon respects for both their sakes, which kept them asunder until it was too late. For whilst he would, and would not; looked and longed, and shyly *shilly-shallied*, other influences were brought to bear. The lady's friends were anxious that she should wed a wealthy fool, and possibly the proud impetuous beauty of sixteen or seventeen may have felt piqued at Sidney's delay, and wilfully played into the hands of an evil fortune. How Sidney was aroused from his dream, and awoke to the fact that he had lost his day, and might now stretch forth his empty arms till they ached, and call in vain upon those eyes that were far from him as the stars, is told in his sonnets; how the reckless lady found that she had dashed away the sweetest, purest cup of noble love ever proffered to her lips, is written in her after-life, and in the useless search for that which she had missed once and for ever. The two were doomed to walk on the opposite banks, with

yearnings toward each other, while the river of life kept broadening on between them, pushing them farther and farther apart, who were sundered for all time, possibly for eternity.

The character of Lord Rich as a husband is painted by Sidney in sonnet 22. The description agrees with others in representing him to have been a poor, vulgar Lord with a very sordid soul.

'Rich fools there be, whose base and filthy heart
Lies hatching still the goods wherein they flow
And damning their own selves to Tantal's smart;
Wealth breeding want; more blest, more wretched grow:
Yet to *those* fools Heaven doth *such wit* impart,
As *what their hands do hold* their *heads do know*,
And knowing *love*, and, loving, lay apart
As sacred things, far from all Danger's show!
But that rich Fool who, by blind Fortune's lot,
The richest gem of love and life enjoys,
And can with foul abuse such beauties blot;
Let him, deprived of sweet but unfelt joys,
(Exiled for aye from those high treasures, which
He knows not) grow in only folly rich.'

The sonnets lead us to think that the lady's heart remained with Sidney; although or *because* he depicts the passion as being kept sacred chiefly through her own strength of character. In sonnet 11 he treats the subject in an elegantly quaint manner. 'In truth, O love,' he exclaims, 'with what a boyish mind thou dost proceed in thy most serious ways! Here is heaven displaying its best to thee. Yet of that best thou leavest the best behind.' For like a child that has found some pretty picture-book with gilded leaves, and is content with the glitter and the outside show, and does not care for the written riches, so love is content to play at 'looking babies' in Stella's eyes, and at bo-peep in her bosom.

'Shining in each outward part,
But, fool! seeks not to get into her heart.'

Then the lover's pleadings grow more in earnest.

'Soul's joy! bend not those morning stars from me,
Where virtue is made strong by beauty's might;
Where love is chasteness, pain doth learn delight,
And humbleness grows on with majesty:
Whatever may ensue, oh let me be
Copartner of the riches of that sight:
Let not mine eyes be hell-driven from that light;
Oh look! oh shine! oh let me die, and see!'

In sonnet 73, the Poet has dared to steal a kiss whilst the lady was sleeping, and the aspect of her beauty, when ruddy with wrath, causes him to exclaim

'O heavenly fool! thy most kiss-worthy face,
Anger invests with such a lovely grace,
That Anger's self I needs must kiss again!'

This stolen kiss was the one immortalized in his famous 81st sonnet, commencing

'O kiss! which dost those ruddy gems impart.'

In one of the songs interspersed among the sonnets, the Poet also tells us of a stolen interview on the part of the two Lovers.

'In a grove most rich with shade,
Where birds wanton music made;
Astrophel with Stella sweet,
Did for mutual comfort meet;
Both within themselves oppressed,
Both each in the other blest.
Him great harms had taught much care;
Her fair neck a foul yoke bare:
Wept they had; alas the while!
But now tears themselves did smile.'

Here they had met, with eager eyes and hungry ears, asking to know all about each other in absence.

'But, their tongues restrained from walking,
Till their hearts had ended talking!'

At length the lover pleads—

'Stella, sovereign of my joy,
Fair triumpher of annoy;
Stella, star of heavenly fire,
Stella, loadstar of desire:
Stella, in whose shining eyes,
Are the lights of Cupid's skies:
Stella, whose voice when it speaks,
Senses all asunder breaks;
Stella, whose voice when it singeth,
Angels to acquaintance bringeth;
Stella, in whose body is
Writ each character of bliss,
Whose face all, all beauty passeth
Save thy mind, which it surpasseth,
Grant, O grant—but speech alas!
Fails me, fearing on to pass;
Grant—oh me, what am I saying?
But *no fault there is in praying!*

Stella replies, and

'In such wise she love denied
As yet love it signified.'

For whilst telling him to cease to sue, she says his grief doth grieve her worse than death, and

'If that any thought in me
Can taste comfort but of thee,
Let me feed, with hellish anguish
Joyless, helpless, endless languish!
Therefore, Dear, this no more move
Lest, tho' I leave not thy love,
Which too deep in me is framed,
I should blush when thou art named.'

Thus we have it upon Sidney's testimony, that the lady triumphed in her purity, whilst acknowledging him to be

the natural lord of her love. The conditions on which she was his, are stated in sonnet 69.

'O joy too high for my low style to show,
O bliss fit for a nobler state than me!
Envy put out thine eyes, lest thou do see
What oceans of delight in me do flow.
My friend that oft saw'st thro' all masks of woe,
Come, come, and let me pour myself on thee.
Gone is the winter of my misery;
My Spring appears; O see what here doth grow!
For Stella hath, with words where faith doth shine,
Of her high heart given me the monarchy:
I, I, oh! I may say that she is mine:
And tho' she give but thus conditionly
This realm of bliss, while virtuous course I take,
No kings be crown'd but they *some* covenants make.'

The marriage of Penelope Devereux with Lord Rich, appears to have been promoted by the Earl of Huntingdon, then Lord President of the North, who was a great friend of the family, a relative also, and one of the guardians of the young Earl of Essex. The sisters, Penelope and Dorothy, sometimes resided in his house. In a letter addressed to Lord Burghley, the other guardian, March 10th, 1580, the Earl of Huntingdon proposed that a match should be made between the Lady Penelope and the young Lord Rich, he 'being a proper gentleman, and in years very suitable.'[1] In August of the same year, Essex informs Burghley that he is about to leave Cambridge for a time, on purpose to accompany Lord Rich, 'who, for many causes not unknown' to the guardian, was very dear to him. The handing over of the Lady Penelope to this Lord Cloten, was then about to be completed.

In his 'Epistle to the King,' with which the Earl of Devonshire accompanied the 'Discourse' written by him in defence of his marriage with Lady Rich, the case is

[1] *Lansd. MSS.*, 31, f. 40.

thus put on behalf of the 'poor lost sheep,' shut out of the fold, as he calls his wife. 'A lady of great birth and virtue, being in the power of her friends, was by them married against her will unto one against whom she did protest at the very solemnity, and ever after; between whom, from the first day, there ensued continual discord, altho' the same fears that forced her to marry, constrained her to live with him. Instead of a comforter, he did study in all things to torment her; and by fear and fraud did practise to deceive her of her dowry; and tho' he forbore to offer her any open wrong, restrained with the awe of her Brother's powerfulness, yet as he had not in long time before (the death of Essex) in the chiefest duty of a husband used her as his wife, so presently after his death, he did put her to a stipend, and abandoned her without pretence of any cause, but his own desire to live without her.' It was, says Mountjoy, after Lord Rich had withdrawn himself from her bed for the space of twelve years, that he did 'by persuasions and threatenings, move her to consent unto a divorce, and to confess a fault with a nameless stranger!'

Two years after the marriage of Penelope Devereux with Lord Rich, Philip Sidney married the daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham, but if we are to trust the sonnets, and poetry is often true to the deepest truth, his love for Lady Rich, and her love for him, must have survived the marriage of both. Sidney was struck down with his mortal wound at Zutphen, on the 22nd of September, 1586, and he died on the 17th of the October following.

His widow was again married, this time to the Earl of Essex, in the year 1590. She thus became sister to Lady Rich, Sidney's first love. The sonnets in which Sidney had proclaimed his passion were first published in the next year. And, as a curious illustration of the manners of the time, Spenser in a new Volume of Poems printed in 1595, also celebrated the loves of 'Astrophel and

Stella,' and inscribed the poem 'to the most beautiful and virtuous Lady, the Countess of Essex.' Thus Sidney, having lost his first love, and being in all likelihood married at the time, was not only deeply in love with the wife of another man, but sang of it in fervent verse, and rejoiced in it, 'tho' nations might count it shame,' and, after his death, his friend, the Poet Spenser, publishes an apotheosis of this passion, and respectfully dedicates his poem to Sidney's widow, who had now become Lady Rich's sister!

In applying the latter sonnets of Shakspeare to the character of Lady Rich, it will be well to recall this puzzling state of things, in relation to the sonnets of Sidney and the poetry of Spenser. Spenser introduces Lady Rich as 'Stella' in his 'Colin Clout's come home again'—

> 'Ne less praiseworthy Stella, do I read,
> Tho' nought my praises of her needed are,
> Whom verse of noblest Shepherd, lately dead,
> Hath praised and raised above each other star.'

And in his 'Astrophel; a pastoral Elegy upon the Death of the most noble and valourous Knight, Sir Philip Sidney,' he has caught up for immortality that early love of Sidney's for Lady Rich, with the tenderness of its dewy dawn about it, and the purple bloom of young desire. Many maidens, says the Poet, would have delighted in his love, but

> 'For one alone he cared, for one he sigh't,
> His life's desire, and his dear love's delight.
> Stella the fair, the fairest star in sky,
> As fair as Venus or the fairest fair;
> A fairer star saw never living eye
> Shoot her sharp-pointed beams thro' purest air:
> Her he did love, her he alone did honour,
> His thoughts, his rhymes, his songs were all upon her.
>
> To her he vowed the service of his days,
> On her he spent the riches of his wit,
> For her he made hymns of immortal praise,
> Of only her he sung, he thought, he writ.'

This 'gentle Shepherd born in Arcady,' was engaged in hunting, on foreign soil, in a forest wide and waste, where he was wounded by a wild beast. There he lay bleeding to death,

'While none was nigh his eyelids up to close,
And kiss his lips like faded leaves of rose.'

At length he was found by some shepherds, who stopped his wound, though too late, and bore him to his 'dearest love,' his Stella, who, when she saw the sorry sight,

'Her yellow locks, that shone so bright and long,
As sunny beams in fairest summer's day,
She fiercely tore, and with outrageous wrong
From her red cheeks the roses rent away.
His pallid face impicturéd with death,
She bathéd oft with tears and driéd oft;
And with sweet kisses sucked the wasting breath
Out of his lips, like lilies, pale and soft.'

He dies, and her spirit at once follows his!

'To prove that death their hearts cannot divide,
Which living were in love so firmly tied.'

'The Gods, which all things see, this same beheld,
And pitying this pair of lovers true,
Transformed them there lying on the field
Into one flower that is both red and blue;
It first grows red, and then to blue doth fade,
Like Astrophel, which thereinto was made.

'And in the midst thereof a star appears,
As fairly formed as any star in skies,
Resembling Stella in her freshest years,
Forth-darting beams of beauty from her eyes;
And all the day it standeth full of dew,
Which is the tears that from her eyes did flow.

'That herb of some Starlight is called by name,
Of others Penthia, tho' not so well;
But thou, wherever thou dost find the same,
From this day forth do call it Astrophel:
And whensoever thou it up dost take,
Do pluck it softly, for that shepherd's sake.'

This representation was most unfair to Sidney's wife, who followed him to the Netherlands in June or July; was near him in his pain, to soothe him and kiss the fading lips, and when the knitted brows smoothed out nobly into rest, she was there 'his eyelids up to close.' This thought, however, did not trouble the serene Spenser.

We are not told in prose how Lady Rich felt and bore the death of Sidney, but Lodowick Bryskett, in his 'Mourning Muse of Thestylis'[1] professes to give an account of her bearing and appearance under the affliction. He says 'twas piteous to hear her plaints, and see her 'heavy mourning cheere,' while from 'those two bright stars, to him sometime so dear, her heart sent drops of pearl.' He continues in some quotable lines—

'If Venus when she wailed her dear Adonis slain,
Aught moved in thy fierce heart compassion of her woe,
Her noble Sister's plaints, her sighs and tears among,
Would sure have made thee mild, and inly rue her pain:
Aurora half so fair herself did never show,
When, from old Tython's bed, she weeping did arise.
The blinded archer-boy, like lark in shower of rain,
Sat bathing of his wings, and glad the time did spend
Under those crystal drops, which fell from her fair eyes;
And at their brightest beams him proyned in lovely wise.
Yet sorry for her grief, which he could not amend,
The gentle boy 'gan wipe her eyes, and clear those lights,
Those lights thro' which his glory and his conquest shines.'

We shall not find a prettier picture of Love and Lady Rich!

Spenser, in his poem on the death of Astrophel, makes Stella follow 'her mate like turtle chaste.' Lady Rich did nothing of the kind in reality; it might

[1] 'Thestylis' says the Countess of Pembroke in her 'doleful Lay of Clarinda,' written on Sidney's death, was

'A swain
Of gentle wit, and dainty-sweet device,
Whom Astrophel full dear did entertain
Whilst here he lived, and held in passing price.'

have been better for her if she had. Her position was now most perilous; one that made her beauty a fatal gift. Much that was noble in her nature seems to have passed away with the noble Sidney. In this sense there may have been some allegorical shadow of the truth in the Poet's representation. There was no love in her own home to kindle at the heart of her life, and touch the face of it with happy health, and hallow her superb outward beauty with the light that shines sacredly within, or gives the expression from above, whilst the well-known fact of Sidney's love for her, and the halo of romance which his poetry had created round her name, were but too likely to expose her more than ever to fresh temptations. To these sooner or later she undoubtedly yielded; and 'not finding that satisfaction at home she ought to have received, she looked for it abroad, where she ought not to find it.' Whether Mountjoy was the first cause of serious quarrel betwixt her and Lord Rich, is not on record. But according to his statement, it must have been as early as 1592 or 1593, that Lord Rich, either with or without just cause, withdrew himself from his marriage bed. He soon found that the wife he had bought had to be paid for. Her friends had forced her to the altar, but there was the after-life to be lived with her, face to face, when the same friends could not help him. She was not the kind of woman to bear her sorrow proudly silent, or receive his unkindness meekly. His morose selfishness was not calculated to draw out her better part. Her's was not the nature from which the sweetness is to be crushed by treading on; not the spirit to submit to a passive degradation.

> 'He dreamed a bonny blooming Rose to wed;
> He woke to find a briar in his bed.'

He caught at the flower of which he had obtained legal possession, and he fell among the thorns. These must

have pricked him unmercifully at times with the finger pointings of scorn, the darts of her wild wit, and the sharp thrusts of the very sting of bitterness.

In a letter written by this poor Lord to Essex, Sept. 11th, 1595, we perceive how uneasily he wriggles on one of his thorns! He is suspicious of the contents of his wife's letters, which he dares not intercept or open.

'My Lord,—I acknowledge with all thankfulness, your Lordship's favour, signified by your letters, which I received yesterday by my man; entreating leave also to put you in mind to remember your letters into Staffordshire to your sister, and to the *other party*. I met this messenger from thence, but durst not intercept the letters he brings, for fear these troublesome times will bring forth shortly a parliament, and so perhaps a law to make it treason to break open letters written to any my lords of the Council, whereby they are freely privileged to receive writings from other men's wives without any further question, and have full authority to see every man's wife at their pleasure. A lamentable thing, that this injustice should thus reign in this wicked age. I only entreat your Lordship, that as you hear anything farther of *that matter* I wrote to you of, I may have your pleasure and farther directions. And so, commending your Lordship to the blessed tuition of the Almighty, I remain your Lordship's poor brother to command in all honesty.

Ro. Rich.'[1]

It is possible that the '*other party*' of this letter may have been Mountjoy, and '*that matter*' referred to the beginning of his *liaison* with Lady Rich. If so, Essex did not trouble himself much in the matter, he rather winked at the freedom of his sister in trying to exchange the 'foul yoke her fair neck bore,' for the solace of her lover's arm. He had his own designs upon Mountjoy. He could have cared little for the lady's morals, to have brought home to her close acquaintanceship, and placed on the most familiar footing, the sparkling, clever, vain,

[1] Among *Anthony Bacon's Papers*.

and presumptuous Antonio Perez, the Spanish renegade, whose intimacy with her son Francis made good old Lady Bacon hold up her hands in horror. 'Though I pity your brother,' she writes in a letter to Anthony Bacon,[1] 'yet so long as he pities not himself, but keepeth that bloody Perez, yea, as a coach companion and bed companion; a proud, profane, costly fellow, whose being about him I verily fear the Lord God doth mislike, and doth less bless your brother in credit and otherwise in his health; surely I am utterly discouraged, and make conscience further to undo myself to maintain such wretches as he is, that never loved your brother but for his own credit, living upon him.' Lady Bacon felt more care for her son than Essex did for his sister.

A pretty fellow was this Perez to fill the situation assigned to him, in the following letter from Mr. Standen to Mr. Bacon, which also serves to show us something of the uncertain temperament and incalculable turns of the Lady Rich. The letter was written in March or April, 1595.

'Right Worshipful,—As we were at supper, my Lady Rich, Signor Perez, Sir Nicholas Clyfford, and myself; there came upon a sudden into the chamber, my Lord and Sir Robert Sidney, and there was it resolved that Signor Perez must be, to-morrow morning at eight of the clock, with my Lord in Court; after which my Lord means to dine at Walsingham House, and in the way, to visit Mr. Anthony Bacon; which, my Lady Rich understanding, said she would go also to dine with them at Walsingham's. And my Lord, asking how she would be conveyed thither, she answered, that she would go in their companies, and in coach with them, and, arrived at Mr. Bacon's house, and there disembarked my Lord, her brother, Sir Robert should bring her to Walsingham's, and return back with the coach for my Lord, her brother. All which I write unto you, Sir, by way of advice, to the end you be not taken unarmed. Women's discretions being uncertain, it may be she will not dismount, and the contrary also will fall out. *Now, it is resolved, that*

[1] *Birch*, i. 143.

Mr. Perez shall not depart, for that my Lord hath provided him here with the same office those eunuchs have in Turkey, which is to have the custody of the fairest dames; so that he wills me to write, that for the bond he hath with my Lord, he cannot refuse that office.'[1]

In a postscript to one of her letters to Anthony Bacon, dated May 3rd, 1596, Lady Rich being at the time in a 'solitary place where no sound of any news can come,' entreats him to let her know something of the world. Amongst other things, she would fain hear what has become of his wandering neighbour, Signor Perez. This flattering knave and charming hypocrite, who had the insinuating grace of the serpent, the subtilty and impudence of Iachimo, was on such familiar terms with Lady Rich as to write the following letter to her, March 26th, 1595.

'Signor Wilson hath given me news of the health of your Ladyships, the three sisters and goddesses, as in particular, that all three have amongst yourselves drunk and caroused unto Nature, in thankfulness of what you owe unto her, in that she gave you not those delicate shapes to keep them idle, but rather that you should push forth unto us here many buds of those divine beauties. To these gardeners I wish all happiness for so good tillage of their grounds. Sweet ladies mine, many of these carouses! O what a bower I have full of sweets of the like tillage and trimmage of gardens.'[2]

The clever scamp goes on to say that he has written a book full of such secrets as some persons would not like to have known. He appears to intimate that on his return to England, these people must pay or he shall publish, so that with the one means or the other, he will live by his book. 'My Book,' he says, 'will serve my turn. But I will not be so good cheap this second time. My receipts will cost dearer, wherefore let every one provide!'

[1] *Birch*, vol. i. p. 229. [2] *Sloane MSS.*, 4115.

In the December of this year 1595, we learn by Rowland White's Letters that there was to be a christening at Sir Robert Sidney's, to which Lady Rich and Lord Mountjoy were both invited. 'I went to Holborn,' says White, 'and found my Lord Mountjoy at his house. I said my lady sent me unto him, to desire him, both in your name and her's, to christen your son that was newly born, which he very honourably promised to do; and when I told him my Lady Rich was godmother, he was much pleased at it!'

Lady Rich had willingly agreed to be a godmother. White told her that both the mother and child had the measles, 'to which she suddenly replied, that after eight days there was no danger to be feared, and therefore it shall be no occasion to keep me from doing Sir Robert Sidney and my lady a greater kindness. When I saw her so desperate, I humbly besought her Ladyship to take a longer time to think upon the danger, which she did till that afternoon, and then coming to her to Essex House, she told me she was resolved.' Her ladyship was not afraid of the measles. And yet the christening was deferred. Writing later in the month, White reports Lady Rich to be in Town, but 'the christening is put off till Wednesday, New Year's Eve. She says that my Lord Compton desired her to defer it till then; because of some urgent business he hath in the country, that will keep him away till Tuesday night; but *I do rather think it to be a tetter that suddenly broke out in her fair white forehead, which will not be well in five or six days, that keeps your son from being christened.* But my Lady Rich's desires are obeyed as commandments by my Lady.'[1] Evidently the lady wished to look her best, and show no spot on the face of her beauty, in the presence of my Lord Mountjoy. The interest which these two mutually inspired kept increasing, until at length their criminal intercourse was publicly

[1] *Sydney Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 385.

known; the husband being looked upon as no impediment. Johnstone intimates that the patience of Lord Rich as a husband was more wondered at than admired; and that his strange conduct in retaining his wife, after being perfectly well aware of her connection with Lord Mountjoy, was thought anything but prudent. But the morality of the time does not appear to have been greatly outraged. The Queen showed the first sign of disapproval. Camden records the fact, that in 1600, Lady Rich 'had lost the Queen's favour for abusing her husband's bed.' This he softened, on revision of his work, to '*Quæ, mariti thorum violare suspecta.*'

Let us now glance for a moment at the Lady Rich in another of the many-coloured lights in which she was seen by her contemporaries. In November, 1598, Bartholomew Young, a poet of the time,—he who is the largest contributor to England's Helicon,—inscribed to her his Translation of the Diana of George of Montemayor, with the following dedication,—

'To the Right Honourable and my very good lady, the Lady Rich.

'Right Honourable, such are the apparent defects of art and judgement in this new pourtraied Diana, that their discovery must needs make me blush, and abase the work, unless with undeserved favour erected upon the high and shining pillar of your honourable protection, they may seem to the beholder less or none at all. The glory whereof as with reason it can no ways be thought worthy, but by boldly adventuring upon the apparent demonstration of your magnificent mind, wherein all virtues have their proper seat, and on that singular desire, knowledge, and delight, wherewith your Ladyship entertaineth, embraceth, and affecteth honest endeavours, learned languages, and this particular subject of Diana,[1] warranted by all virtue and modesty, as Collin, in his French dedicatory to the illustrious Prince Lewis of Lorraine, at large setteth down and commandeth; now presenting it to so sovereign a light, and relying

[1] From which Sidney had made some translations.

on a gracious acceptance, what can be added more to the full content, desire, and perfection of Diana, and of her unworthy interpreter, (that hath in English here exposed her to the view of strangers), than for their comfort and defence to be armed with the honourable titles and countenance of so high and excellent a Patroness. But as, certain years past, my honourable good Lady, in a public show at the Middle Temple, where your honourable presence, with many noble Lords and fair Ladies, graced and beautified those sports, it befel to my lot, in that worthy assembly, unworthily to perform the part of a French orator, by a dedicated speech in the same tongue, and that amongst so many good conceits, and such general skill in tongues, all the while I was rehearsing it, there was not any whose nature, judgment and censure in that language I feared and suspected more than your Ladyship's, whose attentive ear and eye daunted my imagination with the apprehension of my disabilities, and your Ladyship's perfect knowledge in the same. Now, once again, in this Translation out of Spanish (which language also with the present matter being so well known to your Ladyship), whose reprehension and severe sentence of all others may I more justly fear, than that which, Honourable Madame, at election you may herein duly give or with favour take away? I have no other means, than the humble insinuation of it to your most Honourable name and clemency, most humbly beseeching the same pardon to all those faults, which to your learned and judicious views shall occur. Since then, for pledge of the dutiful and zealous desire I have to serve your Ladyship, the great disproportion of your most noble estate to the quality of my poor condition, can afford nothing else but this small present, my prayer shall always importune the heavens for the happy increase of your high and worthy degree, and for the full accomplishment of your most honourable desires.

'Your Honour's
'Most humbly devoted,
'BARTHOL. YOUNG.'

Such was the language of literature addressing Lady Rich, in the year 1598.

Troubled times were now coming for the house of

Essex: the clouds were gathering fast in which the star of Lady Rich was to suffer temporary eclipse.

We may be satisfied that both Essex and his ambitious sister were continually haunted with the thought of his relationship to Elizabeth being as near as that of Queen Mary Stuart's son, and that their blood would be running too red and high with this royal reminder, which begat the most tantalizing hopes: sang with insidious suggestion in his ear, and secretly undermined his whole life, and that Lady Rich fanned this fire in her brother's blood, and fed the foolish aspirations of his perturbed spirit. Possibly the early intrigue of Essex and his sister with James in 1589,[1] in which the 'Weary Knight' expressed himself as so tired of the 'thrall he now lives in,' so desirous of a change, and offered himself, his sister, and all their friends in anything he (James) had to 'do against the Queen,' arose in great part from their thinking that a change, if brought about turbulently, would give Essex a chance of taking the throne. Quite as unlikely things had occurred in the national History. Stowe remarks on the tendency of the Kentish Men to be swayed lightly at the change of Princes.

It is certain that Essex's sister was with him in his schemes, although she personally escaped the consequences. The sonnets of Shakspeare hint as much. And on the morning of the fatal Sunday, when Essex and his armed followers rushed through the streets on their mad mission, she was moving about like the very bird of the storm: her spirit hovers visibly above the coming wave of commotion. The Earl of Bedford (Edward the 3rd Earl) in his letter of exculpation to the Lords of the

[1] In a communication to Burghley, made by Mr. Thomas Fowler from Edinburgh, October 7th, 1589, he says of Lady Rich, 'She is very pleasant in her letters, and writes the most part thereof in her brother's behalf. "He," the King, "commended much the fineness of her wit, the invention, and well-writing."' *Murdin*, 640.

Council,[1] relates how Lady Rich came to his house in the midst of the sermon, and told him that the Earl of Essex desired to speak with him. When he got to Essex House, he found out how he was caught, and he declares that when the sally was made, he secretly escaped down a cross street, and made his way home again. There can be no doubt that her ladyship was a clever, determined whipper-in for the Essex cause. The Earl of Nottingham writing to Lord Mountjoy on the behaviour of Essex after the trial, tells how he spared none in 'letting us know how continually they laboured him about it.' And now, said he, I must accuse one who is most nearest to me, *my sister who did continually urge me on with telling me how all my friends and followers thought me a coward, and that I had lost my valour.*[2] Truly his sister had loved him not wisely, but too well. 'It is well known,' she said, 'that I have been more like a slave than a sister; which proceeded out of my exceeding love, rather than his authority.'[3] This occurs in her letter of defence, written to the Earl of Nottingham, in the postscript of which there is a natural touch. 'Your Lordship's noble disposition forceth me to deliver my grief unto you, hearing a report that some of these malicious tongues have sought to wrong *a worthy friend of yours.* I know the most of them did hate him for his zealous following the service of her Majesty, and beseech you to pardon my presuming thus much, though I hope his enemies have no power to harm him.' This worthy friend of the Earl's, about whom the lady is so anxious, was Lord Mountjoy.

On the accession of James to the English throne, the star of Lady Rich shone once more in the Court horizon. We find pompous John Florio among the first to hail its re-arising. She was one of the five noble ladies to whom he erected his five altars, and burnt incense, when he inscribed to them his Translation of Montaigne's Essays, in

[1] *Birch Add. MSS.*, 4160. [2] *Brewer*, p. 17. [3] *Brewer*, 20.

1603; her ladyship being one of those from whom he had received countenance and favour; 'one of those whose magnanimity and magnificent frank nature have so kindly bedewed my earth when it was sunburnt; so gently thawed it when frost-bound, that I were even more senseless than earth, if I returned not some fruit in good measure.'

The new reign opened with a general restoration of Essex's friends. Lady Rich was one of the six noble personages chosen to proceed to the Scottish border for the purpose of meeting and conducting the new Queen to the English Capital. Lady Anne Clifford, in a note to her narrative, says the Queen showed no favour to the elderly ladies, when the meeting took place, but to my Lady Rich and such like company. The new Queen was in some respects a kindred spirit, and made a favourite companion of Lady Rich. She was, says the French Ambassador Rosni, afterwards Duke de Sully, of a bold and enterprising nature; loved pomp and splendour, tumult and intrigue. With such a Queen, and in such a Court, Lady Rich was again in her glory. Her *status* in the new Court was defined by special license. On the occasion of the Royal procession from the Tower to Whitehall, March 15th, 1604, her place was appointed at the head of fourteen Countesses, who all bore most noble names.

The King granted to Lady Rich 'the place and rank of the ancientest Earl of Essex, called Bouchier, whose heir her father was, she having by her marriage, according to the customs of the laws of honour, ranked herself according to her husband's barony. By this gracious grant, she took rank of all the Baronesses of the kingdom, and of all Earls' daughters, except Arundel, Oxford, Northumberland, and Shrewsbury.' The Earl of Worcester, writing to the Earl of Shrewsbury in 1603,[1] says, in reporting news of the Court, 'This day the King dined abroad with

[1] *Lodge's Illustrations*, vol. iii.

the Florentine Ambassador, who taketh now his leave very shortly. He was with the King at the Play at night, and supped with my Lady Ritchie in her chamber. . . . . We have ladies of divers degrees of favour; some for the private chamber, some for the bed-chamber, and some for neither certain. The plotting and malice among them is such, that I think Envy hath tied an invisible snake about most of their necks, to sting one another to death.'

The Lady Rich would be able to hold her own, and feel perfectly at home in the Court of James and Oriana, where the morals were loose, and the manners free, and her singular beauty shone nightly unparagoned as *Stella Veneris*. 'The Court,' Wilson says, 'being a continued *Maskerado*, where she, the Queen, and her ladies, like so many sea-nymphs or Nereides, appeared often in various dresses, to the ravishment of the beholders; the King himself being not a little delighted with such fluent elegancies as made the night more glorious than the day.' 'Their apparel was rich,' says Carleton, speaking of the ladies in one of these masques, 'but too light and courtezan-like for such great ones.' At the masque which followed the marriage of Sir Philip Herbert, we learn by Winwood's Memorials,[1] that 'there was no small loss that night of chains and jewels, and many great ladies were made shorter by the skirts, and were very well served that they could keep cut no better.' Also, Carleton, in his letter to Mr. Winwood, giving an account of the marriage, supplies us with a curious picture of the Court and King, and the manners of both. He says, 'the Bride and Bridegroom were lodged in the Council Chamber, where the King, in his shirt and night-gown, gave them a *réveille-matin*, before they were up, and spent a good time in or upon the bed, choose which you will believe.'

And all went merrily for the lady Rich. So long as she only lived in adultery with Mountjoy, her honoured

[1] Vol. ii. p. 43.

position in Court and society was unquestioned. But Mountjoy was conscientious enough to wish to make her his wife, and obtain the Church's blessing on the bond which had held them together so long, if so loosely. He desired to make his wife an honest woman, and his children legitimate. By an agreement among the several parties a judgment was obtained from the Ecclesiastical Court. Lady Rich was divorced from her husband, and the Earl of Devonshire immediately married her. But, the divorce proved to be only a legal separation; not a sufficient warrant for a subsequent marriage. The motives of Mountjoy were of the purest and most manly, but an oversight had assuredly been made in interpreting the law. This attempt to make the Lady Rich his own lawful wife, drew down on the head of Mountjoy a bursting thunder-cloud. The Court world which had looked on so complacently whilst the law of God was broken full in its sight, was horrified at this violation of the law of man, even though it were done unwittingly. The King was moved to such anger that he told Mountjoy he had 'purchased a fair woman with a black soul!' others chimed in, most indignantly rejecting the lady's right to become private property! Yet, this 'fair woman with a black soul,' had, whilst merely living in open criminal intercourse, been accepted as the light and glory of the Court. Mountjoy pleaded with manly tenderness and Christian charity for his wife, and tried to justify his act, but in vain. He told the King that 'the laws of moral honesty, which in things not prohibited by God, I have ever held inviolable, do only move me now to prefer my own conscience before the opinion of the world.' In spite of which noble sentiment, his heart broke, trying to bear the sad lot that had befallen him. 'Grief of unsuccessful love,' says his secretary Moryson, 'brought him to his last end.' He died within four months of his marriage, April 3, 1606.

Sir Dudley Carleton, writing to Mr. J. Chamberlain, at Ware Park, on Good Friday, April 17, 1606, says :—

'My L. of Devonshire's funeral will be performed in Westminster, about three weeks hence. There is much dispute among the heralds, whether his lady's arms should be impaled with his, which brings in question the lawfulness of the marriage, and that is said to depend on the manner of the divorce. Her estate is much threatened with the King's account, but it is thought she will find good friends, for she is visited daily by the greatest, who profess much love to her for her Earl's sake; meantime, amongst the meaner sort you may guess in what credit she is, when Mrs. Bluenson complains that she had made her cousin of Devonshire shame her and her whole kindred.

2nd May.—It is determined that his arms shall be set up single, without his wife's.' [1]

The first publication of the dramatic poet, John Ford, was a poem on the death of the Earl of Devonshire, printed in 1606, entitled 'Fame's Memorial,' and dedicated 'To the rightly Right Honourable Lady, the Lady Penelope, Countess of Devonshire.' Some of the lines are interesting :—

'Linked in the graceful bonds of dearest life,
Unjustly termed disgraceful, he enjoyed
Content's abundance; happiness was rife,
Pleasure secure; no troubled thought annoyed
His comforts sweet; toil was in toil destroyed;
Maugre the throat of malice, spite of spite,
He lived united to his heart's delight:

'His heart's delight, who was the beauteous Star
Which beautified the value of our land;
The lights of whose perfections brighter are
Than all the lamps which in the lustre stand
Of heaven's forehead by Discretion scanned;
Wit's ornament! Earth's love! Love's paradise!
A saint divine, a beauty fairly wise:

[1] S. P. O.

'A beauty fairly wise, wisely discreet
In winking mildly at the tongue of rumour;
A saint merely divine, divinely sweet
In banishing the pride of idle humour:
Not relishing the vanity of tumour,
More than to a female of so high a race;
With meekness bearing sorrow's sad disgrace.'

It is difficult to resist smiling at the idea of making the Lady Rich a sort of *winking saint.* The Poet is nearer the mark when he likens her, in another stanza, as a wit among women, to a nightingale amidst a quire of common song birds.

Poor Lady Rich! Her fate was as full of contrast as the moral mixture of her nature, or the outward show of her twilight beauty. The most striking opposites met in her complexion, her character, and her life; as though the parental elements in her were not well or kindly mixed. Like Beatrice, she seems to have been born in 'a merry hour when a star danced,' over her father's house; born to be clothed in the purple of choicest speech a poet's love can lavish; to sit as a proud queen in the hearts of some who were among the kingliest of men, and be crowned with such a wreath of amaranth as descends upon the brow of but few among women. One of the bright particular stars of two Courts; the beloved idol of two heroes; one of the proudest, wittiest, most fascinating women of her time; the Beauty, in singing of whom, the poets vied like rival lovers, as they strung their harps with 'Stella's' golden hair, and strove together in praise of the starry midnight of those eyes that were so darkly lustrous with their rich eastern look. And her day of stormy splendour appears to have ended in the saddest way imaginable; closing in impenetrable night: all the pride of life suddenly laid low in the dust of death, and so dense a darkness about her grave, that we cannot make out her name.

Her mother, the 'little Western Flower,' lively-blooded Lettice Knollys, 'She that did supply the wars with thunder and the Court with stars,' lived on in her lustihood to a green and grey old age, walking erectly, to appearance, after all the crookednesses of her career; her sunset going down with a mellow and tranquil shine, and dying at last amidst her mourners in the very odour of sanctity. But the daughter vanishes from view in a moment, while yet the star of her life rode high, and we are left in the darkness all the blinder for the late dazzle of her splendour. She who had been the cynosure of all eyes, passes out of sight almost unnoticed, and one who was among the first in fame becomes suddenly unknown. Of all who were so well known in their life-time, she surely must have been the least remembered in her death. It looks as though the disappearance had been intentional; as though she had *taken* the black death-veil, and drawn the dark curtains about her, and that by a tacit agreement betwixt her and the world, her name and reputation should be buried with her body, as one of those, of whom the Poet sings, who were

> 'Merely born to bloom and drop;
> Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop:
> What of soul was left I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?
> "*Dust and ashes*" so you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.
> Dear, dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of all the gold
> Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown old.'[1]

So completely did Lady Rich pass out of sight that not a portrait of her remains. Yet she was often painted, and

[1] '*A Toccata of Galuppi's.*' Robert Browning.

there must have been various pictures of her extant at the time of her death. One of Burghley's secret agents, who writes to the English Minister from the Scottish Court, informs him on the 20th of October, 1589, that Rialta (Lady Rich) has sent the King her portrait. There is also a portrait of her mentioned, among the goods and chattels at Wanstead, in the inventory taken of Leicester's property after his death. But I have failed to trace either painting or engraving of Lady Rich at present in existence.[1] It is also most difficult to find any record of her out of poetry and the Sydney Memoirs. I know of but one mention of her death: it was disinterred by Professor Craik only a few years ago from the Latin History of Robert Johnstone (Historia Rerum Britannicarum), published at Amsterdam in 1655. At page 420, the writer relates that Devonshire, stung by the reproaches of the King, who told him he had purchased a fair woman with a black soul, broke down altogether and breathed his last in the arms of Lady Rich, passing away in the midst of her adorations, tears and kisses. And he adds that the lady, worn out with grief and lamentation, did not long survive him, but, laden with the robes and decorations of mourning, lay night and day stretched on the floor in a corner of her bed-chamber, refusing to be comforted, except by death. 'Happy pair,' he says, 'had but a legal union sanctified their glowing and constant love.' This is the only ray of light that pierces the gloom; the only word that breaks the silence.

In this dearth of recorded facts relating to the close of Lady Rich's life it is little marvel that a secret intrigue, such as I deduce from Shakspeare's Sonnets, should not have been elsewhere chronicled for posterity; especially

[1] Her Ladyship must have been painted in some of the Court processions as one of the principal Maids of Honour. Possibly her Portrait may turn up at the forthcoming Exhibition of National Portraits, amongst those that are anonymous or misnamed.

as it was a secret history. The *liaison* with Lord Mountjoy attracted all the public attention at the time. But it may be remembered that although Lady Rich was more closely attached to Lord Mountjoy in the years 1599 and 1600, for instance, than to her husband who, according to Mountjoy, had kept her from his bed for the space of twelve years before they finally and absolutely parted; yet there was no bond that bound her to Mountjoy with inviolable ties when he was away, for example, with his army in Ireland; nothing to hinder such an intrigue, if we consider the manners of the time and the morals of the lady. Mountjoy, we may be sure, was not the only 'noble ruin of her magic.' At the most he could but claim a share in her until he had made her his own, after her divorce from Lord Rich. This, indeed, he acknowledges by his diffidence on the score of paternity, for, out of the five children assigned to him by Lady Rich, he only recognised and provided for three of them as his own. These five children were all born after the Lord Rich (on Mountjoy's own showing) had withdrawn himself from his lady's bed, and at least four of the five were born before the re-marriage of her Ladyship with Mountjoy. Here, then, is a father wanted. One of the two thus left unacknowledged was a daughter named Isabella. And curiously enough we find by letters in the State Papers Office, that in the year 1618 William Earl of Pembroke, then Lord Chamberlain, is one of the persons most anxiously interested in the marriage of Lady Isabella Rich with Sir Thomas Smythe's son, which marriage, for reasons best known to the parties concerned, was effected without the knowledge of the young man's father. Mr. Chamberlain to Carleton, November 28th, 1618, writes that 'the Lord Chamberlain and others have forwarded the marriage of Sir Thomas Smythe's son of eighteen, to Lady Isabella Rich, without knowledge of the father who, at their entreaty, has consented to receive her.' The Rev. Thomas Lorking gives an account of the

affair in his letter of January 5th, 1618-19, 'I forgot to acquaint you, in my former letter, with a matter that hath been here *shuffled up* between Sir Thomas Smythe's son and Mrs. Isabella Rich; who, finding themselves both together at Sir ——— Udal's, some few days since, and liking well enough either the other, my Lord Chamberlain, who was there present, *sent for his own Chaplain*, to Barnard Castle, *to make the matter sure by marrying them : who, making some difficulty, for that they had no license, his Lordship encouraged him, upon assurance of saving him harmless.* So they were presently married; and, from thence *conducted to my Lord Southampton's to dinner*, and to my Lady Bedford's to bed. *But the father is a heavy man to see his son bestowed without his privity and consent.*' Camden says that young Smythe left England about eight months after the marriage, without taking leave of either Father or Mother; and Wood further affirms that he did so 'upon some discontent.' My inference is that the Lord Chamberlain had very private personal reasons for the interest he felt and showed in the marriage of Lady Isabella Rich.

It is with a feeling of sadness that I have come to break that silence which Wordsworth has called a privilege of the grave, a right of the departed, and disturb the repose of Lady Rich, or wake the sleeping echoes of her name by reviving the errors that were laid in dark forgetfulness, all the more that the result is to prove another blot upon her fame as a woman. I would much rather have had to rehabilitate her character; re-set her image in the likeness of that *Stella* who glowed in Sidney's eyes as 'that virtuous soul, sure heir of heavenly bliss;' this would have been far pleasanter than having to rake, as it were, in the dust of death for this fresh frailty of her life, and stir the cold quiet ashes for some cunningly-concealed spark of the old passionate fire. For no one can put together what is known of the lady's life, or see how it got all wrong at the beginning, how she missed her chance when she lost her first

love—the husband on whom her father had set his heart—the man who was to become the flower of English nobility, and give to the national chivalry its crowning grace—

> 'The Courtier's, Soldier's, Scholar's eye, tongue, sword,
> The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
> The glass of fashion, and the mould of form,
> The observed of all observers'—

gentle and beloved Philip Sidney, and was handed over at so early an age to one of the most ignoble and sordid of men, without a feeling of pity for her unfortunate lot and mournful fate. One would not bear hardly on the poor, passionate, warm-hearted lady, who was thus wedded by family necessities to a cold-blooded brute, that had not soul enough to be sensible of his own disgrace, nor conscience enough to fight for his honour, but kept his wife because she was convenient to him, although he well knew of her leanings out of his house, and tortured her for years before he let her leave him altogether.

And it is but right that I should point out how my reading of the latter sonnets does bear hardly on her by making so real and intensely personal that which was never meant to be identified. The sonnets I hold to have been written for the purpose of giving utterance to a youth's passion for a woman whose fame was such as to permit great latitude in speaking of her character in general. But it was never contemplated that they should be read as Shakspeare's own arraignment of Lady Rich on the score of immoral conduct. Something of this shape they assume: now we have the lady unveiled in public court and Shakspeare, as it were, in the witness-box. The lady must not be judged, however, without remembering who the speaker really is, how the sonnets were written, and that when the blackest charges were made, it was never thought she would be requested to lift her veil and have her face known as that of

Penelope Rich. In the other novel readings, such as Elizabeth Vernon's Jealousy, I have been able to do justice to Shakspeare and free his character from some very vile imputations without doing injustice to anyone else. The latter sonnets will not permit such a pleasant solution of their poetic problem. But, in seeking to take the weight off the broad shoulders of our great Poet, one does not want it to fall with unnecessary force on the woman who already had more than enough to bear.

Sidney has painted the Lady Rich as an Angel of Light. My reading, and the exigencies of William Herbert's case, make Shakspeare represent her as an Angel of Darkness. But the living woman in whom these two alternated, and out of which her nature was compounded—the woman who, with her tropical temperament and bleak lot in marriage, could yet remain the conqueror of Sidney and herself in such circumstances of peril as he has depicted in his confessions—the woman who would fight for her husband through thick and thin, and hurry back to him if she heard he was ill, wait upon him and watch over him day and night from a sense of duty rather than a necessity of affection—the woman who was passionately fond of her children, and so devoted to her brother Robert that she would have bartered body and soul for him, and gone through hell-fire for his sake—who was always ready to help a friend when her influence was of value at Court—this woman has never been pourtrayed for us, unless some approach to her picture under other names has been made by the one great master, solely capable, in his dramatic works.

It is difficult, as Fuller has said, to draw those to the life who never sit still. The Lady Rich is one of these subjects, all sparkle and splendour, and the radiance as of rain which continual motion keeps a-twinkle, so various in their humours and sudden in their change. In her the most perplexing opposites intermixed with a subtle play

and endless shiftings of light and shade, many-coloured and evanescent as the breeze-tinted ripples of a summer sea. No two portraits of her could possibly be alike. In some respects she was one of those generous sinners that Christ himself was very kind to, with a heart that was bountiful or pitiful and always ready to do a kindly action for those who were distressed. For example—In March 1596, she writes to Essex :—'Worthy Brother, I was so loth to importune you for this poor gentlewoman, as I took this petition from her the last time I was at the Court, and yesterday I sent her word by her man that I would not trouble you with it, but wished her to make some other friends. Upon which message, her husband, that hath been subject to franticness through his troubles, grew in such despair as his wife's infinite sorrow makes me satisfy her again, who thinks that none will pity her misery and her children if you do not; since, if he cannot have pardon, he must fly, and leave them in very poor estate. Dear brother, let me know your pleasure; and believe that I endlessly remain your most faithful sister, Penelope Rich.' And Rowland White gives us a pleasant glimpse of her ladyship in this aspect—

In March 1597, he had occasion to seek her aid for the purpose of getting presented to the Queen a very earnest petition of Sir Robert Sidney's. He says, 'I took this opportunity to beseech her to do you one favour, which was to deliver this letter (and shewed it to her) to the Queen; she kissed it and took it, and told me that you had never a friend in Court who would be more ready than herself to do you any pleasure; I besought her, in the love I found she bore you, to take some time this night to do it; and, without asking anything at all of the contents of it, she put it in her bosom and assured me that this night, or to-morrow morning, it would be read, and bid me attend her.' Which makes us feel a waft of cordial warmth breathed from a kindly-affectioned heart, as the letter disappears in its temporary resting-place.

THOMAS THORPE,

AND HIS

'ONLIE BEGETTER' OF THE SONNETS.

WE are now able to deal with the Inscription written by Thomas Thorpe, and bring it within the domain of positive facts, instead of leaving its meaning to remain any longer a matter of opinion. I am not sure that it is without a touch of malicious satisfaction that I place Thorpe *after the Sonnets* for the first time! Whilst standing full in front of them, darkening the doorway, and almost shutting Shakspeare out of sight, he has given me a great deal of trouble. And yet, he is not so much to blame for the perplexity, as others are. I venture to doubt that the Elizabethans, who knew their man, ever mistook his meaning, or were misled by his '*onlie begetter*.' This was left to the discoverers of later times, in which Thorpe's Inscription, rather than Shakspeare's Sonnets, has become the main object of critical interest and ingenuity, and Thorpe's shallowness not Shakspeare's depth has received all the attention of efforts which have been vain as it would be to try and gauge the depths of azure heaven in the reflex of a road-side puddle. So completely has this inscription on the outside been interposed betwixt us and the Poet's own writing, that the only aim of the efforts hitherto made to decipher the secret history of the sonnets does

but amount to an attempt at discovering a man who should be young in years, handsome in person, loose in character; the initials of whose name must be '*W. H.*' The discoverers being quite ignorant at the outset of their enterprise as to what Thorpe himself knew of the sonnets; what he really meant by his '*onlie begetter*,' and liable, after all, to be met with the fatal fact that he used the word 'begetter' in its more remote, its original sense, and thus inscribed the sonnets, with his best wishes, to the person who might be legitimately called the '*only* obtainer' of them for him to print. We are now in a position to grapple with Thorpe's Inscription—

TO . THE . ONLIE . BEGETTER . OF .
THESE . INSVING . SONNETS .
Mr . W . H . ALL . HAPPINESSE .
AND . THAT . ETERNITIE .
PROMISED .
BY .
OVR . EVER-LIVING . POET .
WISHETH .
THE . WELL-WISHING .
ADVENTVRER . IN .
SETTING .
FORTH . T. T.

A Shakspeare scholar who had read my Article on 'Shakspeare and his Sonnets' in the 'Quarterly Review,' admitted that he could not answer my arguments, which had been urged to show that if the sonnets ever had an 'only begetter' in the creative sense, the Earl of Southampton must have been the man, but he utterly refused, he said, to believe that the Earl of Southampton was Shakspeare's Master W. H. Thus missing the very obvious point, that there is no such person as *Shakspeare's* 'Mr. W. H.!' This mistake has been common with most who have touched the subject. If the Poet himself had penned the dedication, then no amount of labour could have been

wasted in fathoming its import. The word 'begetter' would then, however, have had but one possible meaning. But the Inscription is *not* Shakspeare's; the 'only begetter' and the 'Mr. W. H.' are not *his*; they are only Thomas Thorpe's! He, the Bookseller, having got the sonnets into his hands, wishes 'Mr. W. H.,' whom he calls the 'only begetter,' all happiness and that eternity promised by Shakspeare in the sonnets. He does not say that the Poet promised immortality to Mr. W. H.; but he, Thomas Thorpe, wishes it to him, in setting forth the sonnets. From this inscription it has been assumed that Thorpe dedicated the sonnets to their only objective creator—the man who begot them in Shakspeare's mind, and that this Master W. H. was William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. Not that any worthy attempt has been made to solve a problem or grapple with a great difficulty! Nor has Herbert ever been wedded to the sonnets by any identification of facts; no single proof having been produced! We have had an inference drawn from Thorpe's Inscription, not in the least a result of reading the Sonnets of Shakspeare! A closer study has led the French Critic, M. Chasles, to perceive how untenable is the hypothesis that William Herbert was the '*only Begetter*' of the sonnets in the sense now commonly supposed, and he has tried to make extremes meet by a new reading of Thorpe's dedication, earnestly as though there were but one use of the word '*begetter*,' and as though Thorpe must of necessity have known all about the sonnets, and the secret relationship of the persons concerned! His new interpretation may be given in his own series of conclusions:—'1. That we have here no dedication, properly so called, at all, but a kind of monumental inscription. 2. That this inscription has not one continuous sense, but is broken up into two distinct sentences. 3. That the former sentence contains the real inscription, which is addressed *by* and not *to* W. H. 4. That the person to whom the inscription is addressed

is, for some reasons, not directly named, but described by what the learned call an *Autonomasia* (the only begetter of these ensuing sonnets). 5. That the latter sentence is only an appendage to the real inscription. 6. That the publisher, in the latter sentence, is allowed to express his own good wishes, not for an eternity of fame to the begetter of the sonnets, which would be an impertinence on his part, but for the success of the undertaking in which he, the adventurer, has embarked his capital.'

The critic argues that William Herbert is the writer of the inscription, and that he dedicates the sonnets to their 'only begetter,' the Earl of Southampton. This reading looks like a discovery at first sight, but it will not bear a second thought. It seeks to surmount one obstacle by another still greater. To have to wrench the word '*wisheth*' from its present place in that wild way is a violation of all probability more patent than anything hitherto proposed in regard to the dedication. What makes M. Chasles' interpretation appear feasible on a first glance is that it somewhat illustrates the underlying facts of the case. If any man in this world did set Shakspeare writing sonnets, and call forth our Poet's love in that form, it certainly must have been the Earl of Southampton. But it is difficult to see why it should have been assumed that Thorpe knew of an 'only begetter' in the creative sense, and who he was, or what would be the advantage of proving that the inscription did dedicate to such an 'only Begetter' when the sonnets themselves would disprove it again by telling us in Shakspeare's own words, that there was no sole begetter in any such sense? It is only a later endeavour to set Thorpe above Shakspeare. The inscription, however, will not bear such a division; it is essentially one. If the Printers had made a mistake and run it on, Thorpe was there to correct it. But his own phraseology makes that impossible, and carries us over any break or division. Mr. Corney thinks it was an over-

sight on the part of Thorpe to add his well-*wishing* Adventurer so close to the *wisheth*. This is a strange observation to make, and most unfortunate in relation to his adopted theory, for it must be obvious to all who consider how fond were the Elizabethan sonneteers, Shakspeare especially, of the figures *Anadiplosis*, or the *Redouble*, and *Epanelepsis*, or the *Echo-sound*, that Thorpe has been trying to imitate the poetic figure, and managed to produce a *double* of his own, an alliteration in sound and sense which has in it the very smack of his self-satisfaction, and which certainly proves the Inscription to be all one. If this had been the solution of the great Shakspeare problem our 'homely wits' were not in the least likely to accomplish it, for assuredly no Englishman could have made the discovery.

Not only is M. Chasles' reading impossible in the latter part of the Inscription; it was doomed in the beginning if Thorpe meant the only *Obtainer* of the sonnets for his '*only* Begetter.'

In dealing with this dedication we must take it as it stands, remembering always that it is Thorpe's inscription; not Shakspeare's. And first, what did Thorpe mean by his 'onlie begetter of the ensuing sonnets?' There could have been no 'only begetter,' in the creative sense, as is amply proved by the sonnets. There must have been more than one person concerned in their begettal because the two sexes are directly addressed; a variety of character is implied, and dramatically evolved, and where there are two or more Inspirers, there cannot be an '*only begetter*,' except it were Shakspeare. There being no 'only begetter' in that sense, Mr. W. H. could not be rightly addressed, as the sole begetter in such sense. Besides, if there had been an 'only begetter,' whom Shakspeare loved so much, it is impossible to conceive that he could have left the dedication of so much love, to the whimsical wording of a bookseller, who had a strong spice of buffoonery in his nature; this being totally

opposed to what he had done in publishing his poems, and to the promises he then recorded, and as utterly opposed to the spirit of all the personal sonnets. There is no 'only begetter,' then inscribed to by Shakspeare himself, and the sonnets tell us that no such person begot them, how then should Thorpe dedicate to an 'only begetter?'

Some of the earlier commentators, as Chalmers and Boswell, have suggested that by his 'only begetter,' Thorpe might have meant the 'only *obtainer*,' the only person who, so far as Thorpe was concerned, had power to procure the sonnets for him to publish. And this is the original signification of the word. 'Beget,' is derived by Skinner from the Anglo-Saxon begettan or begyten—'obtinere.' The Glossary to Thorpe's 'Analecta Anglo-Saxonica' renders 'begytan' to beget—*obtain*. Johnson derives 'beget,' from the Anglo-Saxon 'begettan,' to obtain. Webster gives the word 'begetter' from 'begetan,' of 'be,' and 'getan' to get. An Anglo-Saxon Glossary of Latin words, apparently of the ninth century,[1] renders 'Adquiri,' *beon be-gyten*. In the Proverbs of King Alfred, we find the word 'beget,' used for obtain. 'Thus quoth Alfred: If thou a friend bi-gete,' *i. e.* if you be-get or get a friend. In Chaucer we have 'getten,' for obtained with the 'y,' as prefix 'y-getten.' Thus the original sense of the word *beget* was possessive, not creative! I believe the word to be used with this primary meaning in 'Titus Andronicus,' 'Till time *beget* some easeful remedy.' It certainly is so used by Dekkar in his 'Satiromastix' which was printed seven years before the sonnets. He writes—'I have some cousin-germans at court shall *beget* you (that is, obtain for you) the reversion of the Master of the King's Revels.' In this sense the 'begetter,' is merely the person who *gets*, or obtains a thing. We have divided the word and doubled the use of it, but Dekkar employs it in the simple Anglo-Saxon sense. And *this is the sense in*

[1] See *Reliquæ Antiquæ*, vol. i. p. 11.

which Thorpe inscribed Shakspeare's sonnets to the 'only begetter.' Such at least, is my interpretation; and it is demanded by all the necessities, illustrated by all the circumstances, enforced by all the facts of the case. In Minsheu's Dictionary (1617), the verb to beget is given to *bring forth.* So that Thorpe in dedicating to the 'begetter,' for the 'obtainer,' had really a double choice of meanings when he inscribed to the only 'obtainer', or 'bringer-forth.' My reading will show that there was no only begetter in any other sense. And, if there had been, we may rest assured that Mr. Thorpe would not have been delegated to explain a mystery which Shakspeare had not thought fit to make clear; he would not be empowered to address the very person whom the Poet has left nameless, with regard to the sonnets. Besides which, if Shakspeare had purposed naming his begetter of the sonnets, and intended to dedicate the individual affection, and the promised immortality to his friend, this was the vaguest way of conferring name and fame ever yet adopted, for there is no name and consequently there could follow no fame. Thorpe was not in the least concerned with the person or persons who 'begot' the sonnets, only in the person who 'got,' *obtained* them for him to print, and it is not in the remotest degree likely that he was made a party to the mystery in any shape. What the three friends did not choose to reveal, they could not permit a bookseller to know, much less to publish abroad. It is the *begetter* FOR him that he addresses with compliments, not the begetter *from* Shakspeare. *The* begetter of the sonnets; not *their* begetter. This 'only begetter,' therefore, is Thorpe's not Shakspeare's. And as Thorpe was only too glad to obtain the sonnets for printing, he would be too fearful of offence to commit himself rashly by any unadvised dedication. Not being commissioned to speak for others, he would be discreet enough to speak only for himself.

In a matter so delicate he would put forth nothing without some warrant for its appropriateness and acceptance; his setting-forth would be done on a safe footing; and 'Mr. W. H.' knew right well that he was not the 'only begetter,' save in the sense of '*obtainer*.' Therefore we may infer that the same power which suppressed the full title of 'Mr. W. H.' would be exerted to prevent any such mistake on the part of Thorpe, whose words would be thus rendered reliable and trustworthy for us.

Thorpe had undoubtedly peeped at his treasure when the sonnets came into his possession, and he knew there was a promise of immortality often repeated in them, but he did not know to whom! He could not know the hidden history, or life-relationships that my reading unfolds. He only approached the sonnets on the bookseller's side. He could only dedicate them to the person who obtained them for printing; could only thank the *getter* of them.

But there is no need to take advantage of my reading, and prove the inscription by the sonnets. The Inscription alone may be made to supply adequate demonstration that Thorpe inscribed to the 'only *obtainer*,' when he dedicated to the 'only begetter.' And first of its writer: Thorpe published Lucan's first book, which was translated by Marlowe. In doing so, he dedicated the work 'To his kind and true friend, Edward Blunt,' in the following conceited and fantastical fashion.

'Blount: I purpose to be blunt with you, and out of my dulness to encounter you with a Dedication in the memory of that pure element all wit Chr. Marlow; whose ghost or Genius is to be seen walk the Churchyard in (at least) three or four sheets. Methinks you should presently look wild now, and grow humourously frantic upon the taste of it. Well, lest you should, let me tell you: This spirit was sometime a familiar of your own, Lucan's first Book translated: which (in regard of your old rights in it) I have raised in the circle of your patronage. But stay now Edward (if I

mistake not) you are to accomodate yourself with some few instructions, touching the property of a Patron, that you are not yet possest of; and to study them for your better grace as our Gallants do fashions. First you must be proud and think you have merit enough in you, tho' you are nere so empty, then when I bring you the book take physic and keep state, assign me a time by your man to come again, and, afore the day, be sure to have changed your lodging; in the meantime sleep little, and sweat with the invention of some pitiful dry jest or two which you may happen to utter, with some little (or not at all) marking of your friends when you have found a place for them to come in at: or if by chance something has dropt from you worth the taking up weary all that come to you with the often repetition of it: censure scornfully enough, and somewhat like a travailer; commend nothing lest you discredit your (that which you would seem to have) judgement. These things if you can mould yourself to them, Ned, I make no question but they will not become you. One special virtue in your patrons of these days I have promised myself you shall fit excellently, which is to give nothing. Yes, thy love I will challenge as my peculiar object both in this, and (I hope) many more succeeding offices: Farewell, I affect not the world should measure my thoughts to thee by a scale of this nature; leave to think good of me when I fall from thee.

'Thine in all rights
'of perfect friendship,
'THOM. THORPE.'

This will afford us a crucial test of the literary taste of the man Thorpe, and we may gather from it the sense in which he would use the word 'begetter.' He affected a rather Pistol-like phraseology, and loved to catch an 'ink-horn term by the tail.' To be quaint in his meaning and far-fetched in his words was the 'humour of it' with him; he sought to be uncommon with a learned look. His 'wisheth the well-wishing' shows that he affected the phrase, the learned style, consequently, he would be quite certain to use the word 'begetter' in its remoter sense; that which lay nearest to its Saxon derivation, and was then passing

into obsoleteness. Now, all the quaintness, all the affectedness, all the remoteness, all that was most uncommon and therefore characteristic of Thorpe, lies in the use of the word 'begetter' for 'obtainer,' and that was why he chose it to express his meaning. He used the prefix 'be' to 'getter' just as Spenser affected the 'y' in such words as 'yclad' or 'ycleped'—to give an antique touch. Also, the word *only* is to me as determinate of his meaning as the word 'begetter.' It must be plainly apparent that the emphasis on this '*only*' is most incompatible with the tone of the latter portion of the inscription, if we suppose Thorpe to have used the 'begetter' in the creative sense. To the *only* begetter he says, with all the authority in the world! Yet, later on, he does not know who it was to whom Shakspeare had promised immortality. If he were sure of the *only one* he would not have been thus weak and wavering. He would not have skirted the edge of the subject if he had struck to the heart of the matter in his 'only begetter.' Had Mr. W. H. been the 'only begetter' as the objective creator of the sonnets, and Thorpe had known this, and said it, and used the word *only* with such certitude, then it was the idlest impertinence for him to have weakly *wished* Mr. W. H. *that* 'eternity promised by our everliving Poet.' Had he been in possession of the fact supposed, he would have followed up the bold note of his 'only begetter' with words more definite and sure. He would have said to whom the immortality had been promised, and congratulated the person addressed, if he had known, as he must have known if he inscribed to the 'only begetter' of the sonnets in Shakspeare's mind; the sole object of Shakspeare's love. But whatever else may be obscure, it is luminously self-evident that Thorpe does not say, and did not know to whom the immortality was promised. He does not know, does not pretend to know, he only alludes to a known fact in a general way, and

this after being so pointed and particular in his '*only* begetter.' He cannot speak for Shakspeare here; only for himself; if he could, he certainly would have said the most because he is anxious *to* say the most in a complimentary strain. And, as he does not speak for Shakspeare in the latter words of the dedication, but only for himself, he cannot speak for Shakspeare when using the 'only begetter,' consequently, the 'only begetter' must be Thorpe's—that is the person who was really the 'only obtainer' of the sonnets for printing—and he can address him with confidence as such whilst compelled to wish and hint so vaguely in regard to the immortality.

This weight of emphasis on the word 'only' not only serves to turn the scale in favour of the 'obtainer' for the 'begetter,' but it has another signification. It has the look of Thorpe taking position behind what he considers a safe defence, as though the matter stood thus in his mind—'I, Thomas Thorpe, am pushing a transaction that has an equivocal look. Shakspeare is not publishing his own sonnets, and I have no direct warrant from him to publish them, some of which are rather queer in texture. But I did not steal them. I have ample warrant for their appearance. I inscribe them to the only person who had sufficient power to authorise their going to press, and who is responsible for their appearance. Mr. W. H. is well known to Shakspeare, and he can bear all blame should any offence be taken, and effectually shield me. My inscription shall serve to saddle the right horse.' There is still another stress of which the words are susceptible; one peculiarly appropriate to the circumstances. The sonnets must have been a publisher's prize and much sought after. In dedicating to the *only* person who had power to obtain them, Mr. Thorpe was proud to call attention to the fact that he was the *only* receiver, the *only* publisher fortunate enough to secure the coveted sonnets.

Thus he inscribed them to 'Mr. W. H.' as the *only getter*, or, as he chose affectedly to say, '*only be*-getter' of them for publishing purposes. In doing this he tries to add something complimentary, and likes to show that he has read the sonnets, so he wishes 'Mr. W. H.' all happiness and eternal life, connecting the latter idea with Shakspeare's promises of immortality.

Allowing for Mr. Thorpe's touch of affectation in the use of the word 'begetter,' it is all perfectly natural, and the inscription no longer deepens the mystery of the sonnets. We can now afford to be honest and confess that it was our suspicion that Shakspeare had something to conceal which gave the shadowy terror to, and made a bugbear of Thomas Thorpe's curious inscription!

These are my conclusions on the whole matter. There are properly but two series of the sonnets. The first was written for the Earl of Southampton; the latter for William Herbert. Shakspeare was sought out by the young Earl of Southampton about the year 1591—unexpectedly by the Poet, as is intimated in sonnet 25, (p. 118). The acquaintanceship soon ripened into personal friendship. The youth was generous and loveable, but apt to squander the treasures of his dawning manhood. Shakspeare began to write the sonnets by advising his young friend to get married; thus, from the first, his *object* was his friend, not himself; the sonnets were not intended to be autobiographic. When the Earl met with the 'faire Mistress Vernon' and fell in love with her, Romeo-like, at first sight, a change of subject and treatment was suggested by the Earl himself, as is indicated in sonnet 38, (p. 157); and the Poet commenced writing dramatically on his friend's new affection, in Southampton's own book. He went deeper and deeper into his subject, sometimes treating it playfully, sometimes in sad earnest, as the feelings were more intensified by time and trial. This continued, in the various ways illustrated by my reading, up to the

year 1603, when the Earl of Southampton was released from prison, the dramatic sonnets being interspersed with personal ones written from time to time; although the sonnets had nearly ceased when the Earl was married to Elizabeth Vernon in 1598. His purpose in beginning the sonnets was to induce his friend to marry, and when the Earl has fallen in love with Elizabeth Vernon, he devotes them chiefly to the practical purpose of carrying on the courtship, and they nearly end with the marriage.

In the spring of 1598 William Lord Herbert came to live in London, and formed a personal friendship with Shakspeare. Southampton was away from England almost the whole of this year, and Herbert possibly drew nigher to the Poet on that account. He succeeded in getting Shakspeare to write some sonnets for him, and by doing so became the cause of all the mystery.

Shakspeare most certainly never wrote the Southampton Sonnets with any intention of their coming before the public by such a bye-way under his own name. When he began to write the sonnets it was with no thought of their being printed. In sonnet 17 he looks forward to their remaining in *MS.*, and the paper on which he writes growing yellow with age. Nor is it easy to see how he could have published the sonnets as his own, or have been connected with the selling of them, as they were at first so sacred a memorial of private friendship that the Poet must have felt it a sort of sacrilege to take them to market. In this respect his intention is proclaimed in sonnets 21, (p. 132), and 102, (p. 253), where he tells us that he purposed not to sell, and 'that love is merchandised whose rich esteeming the owner's tongue doth publish everywhere.' Still, he may at one time have *meant to print them without his name* in the manner previously suggested; and his intentions have been frustrated by an act of the Earl, such as giving away the copy of his sonnets to Herbert, who thus stepped into possession, and the matter was

thereby taken out of Shakspeare's hands. As my reading shows, neither of these two friends had aught to conceal; there is nothing in the nature of the Southampton Sonnets to cause the mysterious publication of them.

The Earl's love and fortunes had prospered. The Queen was dead, and all her tempers over. Clearly there were no reasons here for any further concealment had Shakspeare chosen to fulfil his own promises in his own way, and dedicate the Southampton Sonnets to *their* 'begetter.' We must look to the Herbert Series for an explanation. Here we discover something to conceal; and, in his infatuation for a woman of loose character, not in Shakspeare's moral delinquencies shall we find the predominate reason why the sonnets were ushered into the world in such a second-hand manner. It suited Herbert—and even he could have entertained no thought of printing the latter sonnets so long as Lady Rich was alive—that if the sonnets were printed they should go forth veiled in their own mystery, and not tell the various love-stories publicly which they had told privately to the initiated friends. He would be pleased to have his sonnets included with the rest of Shakspeare's, and desirous that they should go forth without explanation of facts or identification of persons. Shakspeare, I imagine, must have felt some dislike of the Herbert Series being included, for he could not but have seen that, however read, they did not reflect any credit on himself. Not that he supposed they would ever be interpreted as personal confessions, so thoroughly would the '*sonnets among his private friends*' be understood to mean sonnets written *for* his private friends, but although he was so indifferent to fame he could not have been indifferent to the fate of his sonnets which were so expressive of his love for Southampton. Still, if Herbert obtained that Earl's consent for the whole of them to go forth together, just as sonnets, there remained nothing for Shakspeare to do but to give his consent also. If Southampton did not object,

did not seek to have his sonnets kept apart from others, Shakspeare would naturally feel it was not for him to resist on his own behalf, if he had been so inclined. I do not argue, however, that the sonnets were put forth by Thomas Thorpe instead of Shakspeare because there was need of any kind of concealment. There was no necessity of concealing that which readers were not in the least likely to discover. After all, the sonnets were composed for private purposes—the work of 'idle hours'—and were a sort of private property. Shakspeare had given them away to the private friends, who were in a position to do as they pleased with their own. This idea of concealment has resulted from the subject of some of the sonnets being coupled with Thorpe's seemingly singular inscription. The friends were not putting on the mask against detection in permitting a dedication of any kind to one of themselves! It was never contemplated that the sonnets would re-tell their own secret histories; therefore such a possibility was not sought to be provided against, by what would have been a most shallow device. I look upon the affair as a private confidence with which Thorpe had nothing whatever to do, and it has been a stupid mistake to expect the Bookseller to explain that which the Poet and his friends never thought of explaining, never meant to be explained, never dreamed that the world would not rest on the subject until their secret should be explained. Herbert, having a personal interest then in the sonnets, and influence with the writer of them, would obtain from Shakspeare—before he left London for Stratford—some such permission as that they might be printed at a future day if in a form Southampton would not object to. And the Poet, after giving up all his 'pretty ones,' probably gave a promise that the whole should be left a mystery as to their precise nature. So Shakspeare, in his easy way, let the matter *slide*, and Herbert acquired the right to give away the sonnets. Thorpe, then, dedicated

them to the only *Obtainer*, and the inscription was left to him with the injunction that the present title of Pembroke should be suppressed and initials alone be used. In accordance with which hint, and to follow suit, Mr. Thorpe as setter forth, and contrary to his usual custom, only prints his own Initials. And thus was Shakspeare's intended but unfinished Monument to Southampton crowned and completed with the head and inscrutable face of a Sphinx, upon which, to perfect the riddle, Thorpe inscribed his hieroglyphics. It suited the publisher's purpose and was consonant with his character to make the thing look as mysterious as possible, to provoke curiosity and increase his importance. The transaction was most likely effected by an intermediate person, who was also anxious for the sonnets to be secured in print. I do not think Herbert had any direct dealings with the printers. The arrangement would have been somewhat more perfect, and the press better corrected if anyone so intimately acquainted with their secret history had read the proofs of the sonnets. Luckily, certain batches of the sonnets must have been so written, or fastened together, as to cohere in spite of the printers' or other handling, and the Herbert Series did secure some sort of marking-off into its distinct position.

My greatest difficulty has been with the many loose single sonnets which had got out of position and mixed the various strata of the whole book in a most perplexing manner. It has been my endeavour to restore each to its own place according to its kind and the law of formation. Finally, I conclude that no one but the person for whom the latter sonnets were written would or could have given the whole of them to the press; that they are not personal to the Poet whose wise reticence and shrinking from giving publicity to personal affairs—one of the most marked characteristics of our race—must have been a ruling power of his English nature; that the sonnets *were* inscribed by

Thorpe to their 'only begetter' as the only *obtainer*; that they had no *only begetter* in any other sense; that this only *obtainer* was William Herbert, who obtained the Southampton Sonnets together with such other odds and ends of Shakspeare's poetry as the Poet had given to him; that he added to these the sonnets which had been written for himself at his own suggestion; he giving the subject and having a hand in their composition; that his own series was written for him in the years 1599 and 1600—when the Southampton Sonnets ceased for a time—before Herbert became Earl of Pembroke—which is implied in the permitted inscription to 'Mr. W. H.;' that he obtained a general permission from Shakspeare respecting their being given to the press on account of his personal interest in the sonnets, in consequence of which interest he collected the sonnets, and thus they were inscribed to him so curiously by Thomas Thorpe!

I also conclude that Herbert took advantage of the Poet's general permission, and that he alone is responsible for bringing up the rear of the sonnets with the Black-Guard. In my own mind I am perfectly sure that there are some sonnets included which Shakspeare never meant to be printed, even if he ever saw them all. I can imagine him writing most of these for a purpose, but that purpose was altogether private, and fully served when the sonnets were sent to the person addressed, especially if they were sent as Herbert's. And I cannot imagine Shakspeare giving his consent for the sonnets to appear exactly as they come to us. There are some here, I think, that made the Poet look amazed when he saw the printed copy. It is certain he never had proof-sheets for correction, and the fact has to be accounted for! If it had been all square and above-board, as we say, why should not Herbert or Thorpe have secured the Author's finishing touch?

It is to me a matter of moral certainty that Shakspeare

did not write the 151st sonnet, which is irrecognisable as his by any light flashed from his spirit, or reflected in his works; it has no likeness to the other sonnets; it is opposed by sonnet 141—utterly diverse in spirit and tendency; quite incompatible with his treatment whether smiling or serious, and absolutely repudiated by the rebuking gravity and solemn significance of the two last sonnets.[1] Thus, for the various reasons assigned, I hold that at least four of these pieces were written by William Herbert. What warrant he may have had for printing lines of his own I cannot judge; there is no evidence.[2] But I do feel satisfied that there are pieces to the publication of which Shakspeare never gave his sanction. I have shown that these things were not written upon a passion of his own, and I hold him to have been as incapable of giving his leave for the whole of them to become public property, more especially when they had been written for a private purpose—at the suggestion of another. He could

[1] Since writing the foregoing, I find by the 'Gem Edition' that an Editor of delicate taste has singled out this sonnet, to reject it from the Herbert series. The instinct may be safely trusted a little farther.

Mr. Palgrave accepts the Personal Theory, and, on his own admission, can make but little of it. Although each sonnet 'is an *Autobiographic Confession*,' he remarks, we are completely foiled in getting at Shakspeare himself, and these '*revelations* of the Poet's *innermost nature*' appear to 'teach us less of the man' than the tone of mind which we trace or seem to trace in his Dramas. The 'strange imagery of passion which passes over the magic mirror *has no tangible existence before or behind it*.' And yet these sonnets are, every one of them, '*Autobiographic!*' It is *Shakspeare showing himself to us*, not only in person, for he has revealed to us, so they keep saying, the 'depths of his heart, in *a drama more tragic than the madness of Lear, or the agonies of Othello*.' Would it not be wiser and more prudent to suspect such a Theory, than to suppose that Shakspeare, the great master of expression, the man whose art of saying just what he meant is incomparable, supremely potent, and of infinite felicity, should have written an Autobiography that is Impersonal—a Subjective Revelation which reveals nothing? The thing is a barefaced impossibility! You cannot cross the sea by land.

[2] In sonnet 77 (p. 241), Shakspeare most assuredly offers the pen to Southampton, and asks him to fill some of the vacant leaves of the book in which he is then writing one of the sonnets.

not have permitted all of these latter sonnets to accompany the Southampton ones and thus defile the sanctities of love and friendship. '*Is it not most damnable in us*,' says one of his characters, '*to be trumpeters of our unlawful intents?*' And is it to be credited that he would not feel and act up to the level of that thought in such a matter of personal import as this? he who must have had the supremest sense of fair fame and unstained reputation, a perfect loathing of that which should bear a 'hateful memory upon record.' 'The purest treasure mortal times afford is spotless reputation,' says Mowbray. 'Good name in man and woman, dear my lord, is the immediate jewel of their souls,' says Iago. Prince Harry prays over his slain enemy Hotspur, that his praise may ascend to heaven, his ignominy sleep in the grave, and not be remembered in his Epitaph. 'I have offended reputation,' exclaims Antony, 'a most unnoble swerving.' The thought of his lost reputation sobers Cassio on the instant, and the remembrance of his infamy gives the death-sting to Enobarbus. 'But, if it be a sin to covet Honour, I am the most offending soul alive!' cries his darling hero, Harry V.

A most sensitive feeling of honour is associated with all his nearest touches of nature,—his greatest moments of action—his proudest thoughts of life—his deepest apprehensions of death,—and I will not believe that in this regard he was careless for himself alone in a work which was to be published with his name. It is not possible to think that a man who cared so little about gathering up his best works could have been party to the careful treasuring up of his worst! *With* Herbert the sonnets were left: *from* Herbert they were obtained by Thorpe, and TO Herbert belongs the responsibility of printing all that we find under the title of Shakspeare's Sonnets, and the onus of their being inscribed to *himself* as 'Mr. W. H.' This is to all intents and purposes ac-

knowledged, and even pointed out by Thorpe. If the Poet expressed any wishes on the subject they were not implicitly obeyed; more was included as '*Shakspeare's Sonnets*' than had been authorised. This is shown in an artistic point of view *by the insertion of three pieces which are not* '*sonnets*,' *and two fragments on a subject that has nothing to do with the work.* And in the moral aspect it is assuredly the most just to conclude that a want of discretion was far more in keeping with the character of Herbert than with that of a man who was so full of self-respect, domestic prudence, practical sagacity, wise reserve, and *canny* discreetness as was our Shakspeare; he who had passed his London-life without blemish of his honour, stain on his reputation, or suspicion of his morality, and who, when the sonnets were printed, had more incentives than ever for observing the decencies of life, and the respectabilities of personal character.

OF THE NEW READING

AND

ARRANGEMENT.

THE reading of Shakspeare's Sonnets now presented affords the only theory yet adventured that is not full of perplexity and bewilderment. It is the only one that surmounts the obstacles, disentangles the complications, resolves the discords, and out of various voices draws the one harmony. It ignores no difficulty, violates no fact, strains no point for the sake of making extremes meet; it gathers up every possibility, and is consistent from beginning to end. We cannot but feel a degree of certitude that the central magnet of the meaning must be grasped when all things surrounding thus fall into place, and obey their compelling law of gravitation; cannot but think we have reached the heart of the Maze when standing where so many probabilities converge, and we see, as in a map, the beginning of each; the blending of all.

The personal interpretation is a real rendering of darkness visible. The story breaks off suddenly after the first twenty-six sonnets: it will not run or unravel autobiographically. To borrow an illustration from the silkwinders, it takes a world of trouble to find the 'end' each time there is a snap; and, when found, it is continually a start and then a stand-still.

It is utter folly to talk of a self-revelation made by Shakspeare so inward that we cannot reach it. There are

fifty[1] plain facts to be met—facts of outer life, of character, of sex,—on the surface of the sonnets, all opposed to the Autobiographic view, before anyone need have dived into the deeps of their own subjectivity for the supposed dreadful secrets of the Poet's heart. Nor will the theory work which holds that the sonnets are mere fantastic exercises of ingenuity, having no root in reality—no relation to Shakspeare's own life. They are intensely real from first to last through a wide range of varying feelings, whatsoever their meaning. Although they were published as sonnets, and the stories they once told have passed out of sight when the Poet withdrew into his cloud, they refuse to be read singly, even if we give separate titles to every one. The life cannot be pulverised out of them by any such process. The story will not come to a full stop at the sonnet's end. It will continue its course out of sight, lurking underground, like the river Mole, where it cannot run visibly on the surface, and reappear a little farther on. Those who take so shallow a view must, of necessity, be exceedingly dull readers of poetry, or very

[1] 'Fifty?' In one sonnet alone, the 124th, there are at least a dozen:—

1. The speaker's affection has been the 'Child of State.'
2. It is no longer the 'Child of State.'
3. Had it continued to be merely so it would now have likewise become the 'unfathered bastard' of Fortune!
4. It no more suffers in the 'smiling pomp' of a Court.
5. It has heretofore so suffered.
6. The speaker is hindered by what has occurred from joining the young men of his own rank ('OUR Fashion') who are going to help put down Rebellion, or facing the threatened blow of 'thralled Discontent.'
7. Such speaker must be a possible servant of the State; obviously a Soldier.
8. He fears not 'Policy' the heretic! which has worked against him.
9. His affection now stands all alone in its own policy of independence.
10. Something has occurred which dignifies the speaker with danger, and makes fresh appeal to his steadfastness.
11. He rejoices in having beforehand broken the power of accident by making his 'love' secure, come what might.
12. To the truth of his assertions he calls as present witnesses the spirits of those that suffered an ignominious death in connexion with affairs of State.

often startled by the strange passion in the expression, the unaccountable force of the pleadings, the depths of feeling sounded which make the sonnets perplexing as a dance of many figures to a spectator who is so deaf that he does not hear the music to which the motions are timed. Keats found the sonnets to be full of fine things said unintentionally, in the intensity of working out conceits.[1] It must be felt that the writer has a singular way of saying nothing. Of the two readings this is the shallowest. Shakspeare could write nonsense; no man better; but it was the rich overflow of an irrepressible humour, never the sheddings of a maudlin sentimentality. He never wept on the tearful pretence of a sham sorrow. He was not the man to 'discourse fustian with his own shadow.' The other theory does rest on some natural ground—a belief in his earnestness when he was writing—this theory is absolutely baseless. It is likewise in direct contradiction to his own assertion, for he tells us, with all emphasis, that it is not with him as with '*that Muse*—stirred by a *painted* beauty to his verse.' Not a creation of fancy, but creatures of flesh and blood are his objects; his reliance is on truth and reality; he is no mere fancy-monger or vender of similes! But the crowning absurdity that tops extremity is the third theory, which holds the sonnets to be symbolic;[2] a mere bubble-world of transcendentalism, in which the most richly objective of poets is the most mystically subjective.

[1] *Life*, vol. i. p. 70.

[2] When writing of the German-subjective-transcendental-symbolic view of the sonnets in the first chapter of this work, I did not know that it had been out-Heralded in our country by a writer in 'Temple Bar.' (See No. 17 for '*A new View of Shakspeare's sonnets.*') Had this been written as a burlesque on the German book, it would have made an excellent jest. But Mr. Heraud is as absurdly serious as his cousin-German. '*After a careful reperusal* (he remarks), *I have come to the conclusion that there is not a single sonnet which is addressed to any individual at all.*' He maintains that the '*Two Loves*' of sonnet 144 are '*the Celibate Church on the one hand, and the Reformed Church on the other!*' And in the latter sonnets, our poet is reading his

The present theory, which is really an appeal to common sense on behalf of the most practical of men and poets, alone enables us to see how it is that Shakspeare can be at the same time the Friend who loves and is blessed, and the Lover who doats and is disconsolate; how the great calm man of the sweetest blood, the smoothest temper, and most cheery soul can be the anxious, jealous, fretful wooer who has been pursued by the 'slings and arrows of outrageous Fortune,' and driven from his heart's home to drift about the world as a wanderer, who, in his weakness, has said and done things for which he prays forgiveness, and which in him are not hard to forgive, because he is a lover who has been much tried, and amidst all the shiftings of life and slidings of fortune has been true at heart and steadfast in his love. Here we can see how the Poet has been the Player still, in his 'idle hours,' and how he can personate a passion to the life, and disguise his face past our recognition, and change the dramatic mask at will for the amusement of his '*private friends*:' at one moment rendering the pretty petulance and tender reproaches of a jealous lady who grows desperate because she does not know the worst, but is fully inclined to think it; at another breathing all his heart into the protestations of a ranging lover who has been here and there, and whose love has appeared to be the slave of Time and the sport of wind and wave, and

Bible—'*Has the very Book open before him*,' Mr. Heraud says, 'he is in fact reading the Canticles; and there he finds the Bride, who is "*black* but comely"—at once the bride of his CELESTIAL FRIEND and his own'!!! Oh, *my* Lady Rich how art thou translated! I think this too good to omit, although I can only make a note of it; good enough surely, if boundless folly can reach so far, to tickle Shakspeare in eternity and make him feel a carnal gush of the old human jollity! Verily, he might say of his expounders, as Sterne said of the asses in his 'Sentimental Journey,' 'HOW THEY VIEWED AND REVIEWED US!'

But why recognise such rootless and literally groundless imaginings as these? Wherefore notice such vain shadows at all in the presence of realities firm and fast as the centre? What says Deilus in Randolph's 'Muses' Looking-Glass' when he has been censured for his fear of Shadows? *Who knows but they come leering after us to steal away the substance!*"

yet no distance could sever it from its true resting-place. Then he can lay aside the mask and show his own face calm and noble, and wearing a look of smiling cheer for his friend; or, if there be a shadow on it, this does not darken from within—comes from no selfish pang—no personal compunction of conscience—it only reflects that cloud which is passing over the fortunes of his '*dear Boy*.' Thus we may understand how he can be modest for himself and shrinking out of all notice, yet grow defiant and dazzling as a 'mailed angel on a battle-day' when he is fighting for this friend, and the sword glitters, the shield glows, the valour mounts, and the trumpet rings. These sounding promises and lofty boasts of immortality are only the echoes and reverberations in the upper air of the battle with Time and Fortune, and 'all-oblivious Enmity' which is going on below. Thus we may comprehend how Shakspeare can rejoice in this friend who is all the world to him, when his own life-battle may have been going hard against him, and, directly after, depict the feeling of forlorn friendlessness of that friend who is 'in disgrace with Fortune and Men's eyes,' and who looks on himself as an outcast, and wishes he were as those who have friends and sit within the warm and rosy inner circle of happiness; how the spirit, that in motion was at rest, can appear full of all unrest and disquietude; how the love that is such a still blessedness to the one can be to the other like the fabled thorn in the heart of the Nightingale which she presses and sings 'sweet! sweet! sweet!' bleeding all the while she turns her sorrow into song; how one sonnet can tell of the speaker's '*well-contented day*,' and show that meek spirit of content which really and rightly inherits the earth, and has the richest of all possessions in its own self-possession, whilst its neighbouring plaint embodies a spirit that is perturbed and full of discontent; changeful as a day in April. How he can deal playfully on one side of the same theme, and be deeply, painfully in

earnest on the other. Thus, on the subject of parting he can himself afford to seek a somewhat fantastic and sonneteering kind of excuse—'Even for this—that is, *for me to write about you*—let us separate (39), and render that friend's parting from his mistress (to go abroad) with a most dramatic fire and smoke of torment. He can assert his own steadfastness of unwavering affection, and with an almost monotonous iteration protest its unchangeableness now and for ever, whilst, at the same time, he continues the story: the quarrels, the flirtations, partings and greetings of a pair of lovers the course of whose love did not run smooth, but was full of ups and downs, tests and trials, leavetakings and makings-up. And when he has done ample justice poetically to the character of the Earl, and 'confessed' him with all his unfolded faults and penitent tears, he can, in his own person, give him absolution and, with the lustiest sense of his own liberty to do so, celebrate that 'marriage of *true* minds' in sonnet 116—assert emphatically the truth of the whole matter, and challenge all the world with the airiest, cheeriest defiance to prove any error on him. He writes playful, punning sonnets for William Herbert, and some that paint the youngster's passion in fiery hues, but showing that he presides over his own work; gives his own summing up and last word, we hear his real self, speaking out finally in characterization of the subject, with a judicial solemnity of tone which goes farthest, sinks deepest, and tells us plainly enough when his own spirit touches us to call our attention so that we may look and see his own thought and understand his words. All the secret lies in the simple fact that the 'sweet swan of Avon,' like Wordsworth's swan upon St. Mary's Lake—

'Floats DOUBLE, swan and shadow.'

No other theory can pretend to reconcile the conflicting differences and prickly points of opposition with which the sonnets have so bristled all over that many persons,

seeing the host of difficulties, have shut their eyes and closed the book. This, alone, takes the sonnets almost as they stand; tells their various stories, identifies the different characters; matches these with their expression; calls them by name and they answer, proves many of the inner facts by events, and dates, and illustrations from the outer life of the persons and the historic surroundings of the period. It shows that many of these sonnets are shaped by the spirit of the age; how they wear its 'form and pressure,' and have its circumstances figured in their imagery. It tells us how the things here written were once lived by Shakspeare and his friends. It shows us the concealed half of the Man; the other side of the luminary, and does more than anything hitherto accomplished to connect him with the life of his time; makes him touch earth again; brings him back to us in his habit and affection as he lived. It is the most authentic revelation ever given of his own inner life, for some twelve years of his sojourn on this earth; affords the most private peep into the sanctuary of his soul that was kept so closely curtained to the gaze of his contemporaries, and tells us more about his own self than all that has been gathered of him since the day of his death. By its help we may enter the early garden of his dramatic mind—the very site whereof seemed lost—and trace certain tap-roots of his nature; see how they first put forth their feelers to take hold of that human world which they were to ramify through and through, and embrace all round. These life-roots of his, that germinated in the Sonnets to flower at their fullest in the Dramas, we can now hold up to the light as we might contemplate the hyacinth in its water-glass, with its fine fibres below, and its consummate flower above.

Hitherto half the matter and all the most precious part of the meaning have been lost sight of. We have missed the points that touch life the nearest, and the traits that bring us the closest to Shakspeare. The light of nature

has been put out, and the sonnets have lacked the living glow. We have been shamefully cheated by impoverishing impositions. The images that are figured facts coloured from the life, have hitherto been mere phantoms, making a dumb show of poetry. But once we can see and believe that our Poet is dealing with realities, the rekindled light illumines everything. The sonnets are all astir with a more vital existence. The dust of words is all a-sparkle, the wayside common-places flower again; the world of fancy grows summer-green and golden; a new soul has come into the sonnets! They gain immensely in beauty, gravity, and fitness to subject, when we have reached their underlying realities, and are wondrously enriched when ranged in contrast and set jewel-like, 'each other's beams to share,' wearing the diverse colours of the various characteristics. All their poetic qualities are enhanced by our getting at the right relationship of persons. Truth is ever the eternal basis of the highest beauty, and as we reach the truth here the meaning deepens indefinitely, the poetry brightens in a loftier light. The solemn thought is more sagely fine, the tenderness more pathetic, the feeling more significant, the fancy more felicitous, the strength more potent, the sweetness more virginal, the illustration more appropriate. We are no longer hindered in our enjoyment of the divinely-dainty love-poetry, that could only have been offered to a woman, and which seems to flush the page with the vernal tints of spring and the purple light of love, by the feeling that makes Englishmen 'scunner' to see two men kiss each other, or hear them woo one another in amorous words.

We now see that these sonnets transcend all others as much as his plays are above those of his contemporaries. 'Shakspeare's divine Sonnets,' they were nobly named by Elizabeth Barrett Browning; but how intensely human they are, how exquisitely natural,

could not be known till now, when, for the first time, the real heart-beat of them may be felt. And by as much as they grow in meaning, in vivid life, in morality, does their writer gain in manliness. Hitherto they have been read in sad uncertainty of Shakspeare's drift, or with sadder certainty of his moral delinquency. For the first time we can read them without fear or trembling lest some apparition of the Poet's guilt should rise up vast and shadowy, and as we might try to stammer excusingly, much larger than life. We can now sit down to their banquet of beauty without being nervously apprehensive about the ghost rising. We may see that the most passionate of the sonnets are not necessarily the travail of his own soul and sweat-drops of his own agony; all the more perplexing to us, because he had apparently put himself and us to the torture when there was no need. We can breathe more freely, feel a little calmer, when we do comprehend that he did not crucify himself for the whole world to see his shame; did not make all the poetic capital possible out of his friend; and, having handed him over to his enemies, hang himself publicly, Judas-like, in a fit of repentance. And we shall soon feel that it is not so very marvellous a thing that the most dramatic of poets should have at times employed the dramatic method in his sonnets. Especially when his subject was real life—the life and the loves of those who were so dear to him—in singing of which some disguise was demanded by the nature of the case; the marked position of his friends.

The sonnets have had many readers who felt there was much more in them than had yet been found, and who would have been only too glad if they could have got to the root of the matter by means of such a theory as is now propounded. Charles Lamb, for instance. He was a reader of the sonnets. One who would have brooded over them till his heart ran over in the quaintest

babblement of loving words, if he might only have grasped the revelation that flashed out of them by evanescent gleams, and left the darkness more bewildering than ever. But to catch the Protean spirit, and hold it, and compel it to declare itself in a recognisable shape, was as tantalizing and provoking a task as trying to arrest the reflection of a face in water all in motion, with the sunbeams dancing on it, and the eyes completely dazzled. This will explain why the sonnets have had so few commentators, when the other works of Shakspeare have collected such a host. The wisest readers have been content to rest with Mr. Dyce in his declaration, that after repeated perusals, he was convinced that the greater number of them was composed in an assumed character, on different subjects, and at different times, for the amusement, and probably at the suggestion of the author's intimate associates. And having cracked the nut, as I think, we find this to be the very kernel of it; only my theory unmasks the characters assumed, unfolds the nature of the various subjects, traces the different times at which they were composed, and identifies those intimate associates of Shakspeare who supplied both suggestion and subjects for his sonnets. It brings us, like the Prince in search of his Sleeping Beauty, to the inmost nook of Shakspeare's poetry; the magic hermitage to which the invention of Southampton 'gave light,' and which was locked up and the key given to Herbert two centuries and a half ago. We shall find everything nearly as the Poet left it, for the place is sacred from the touch of Time. The friends and lovers are here pictured as in life, wearing the dresses they wore of old, and looking for us as they looked in the eyes of each other. As we break the stillness the life seems to begin again, the colour comes back to the faces, and the sound of breathing is heard in the charmed chamber of imagery which has been sealed in silence for so long. We have come secretly into the presence of Shakspeare him-

self. Does he resent this intrusion? Do the smiling brows darken at our coming? I trust not, I think not. If I have rightly interpreted the feeling of our Poet for his friend Southampton, he would willingly reach a hand from heaven to place the rightful wreath on his brow. So fully did he once mean to set a crown of immortal flowers where Fortune had bound her thorns, only he was hindered by one of those complications of life that perplex human nature, with circumstances absurdly insufficient, and so often foil intention, and drag down the lifted hand.

Although I maintain that our Poet wrote dramatic sonnets for the Earl of Southampton at his own request, and that, in these, much of the Earl's character is caught and reflected, as Shakspeare could not fail to touch nature whatsoever his standpoint, yet I do not say he undertook to complete the circle of that character in the compass of a certain number of sonnets. It is the courtship rather than the character which is Shakspeare's subject, only character will be visible in courtship as in other things, and so we get glimpses of the Earl's. But our Poet uses the dramatic method with subtle art in these poems, for purposes of his own, in the way he makes the Earl speak of himself and his doings, hoping, no doubt, that the silent eloquence of certain lines might prove their best. He had pleaded in the earlier sonnets—

> 'O, learn to read what silent love hath writ,
> To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit!'

And at times I think he inserts something scarcely warranted, if he were bound by the strictest dramatic propriety. He suggests more to the Earl than might be absolutely conveyed in the sound of the sonnet. He seeks an echo from the inner sense. In the confessional sonnets, as we may call them, after so strong a self-condemnation, so long a list of wilful errors and wanton sins against true

love, the excuses are certainly very weak and puerile, even for a lover to whom much is to be pardoned. If Shakspeare were the speaker, they would be despicable, but for Southampton they are trivial and poor. He himself must have seen how shallow after the admissions of such deep wrong. If he felt guilty when reading the confessions, the consciousness must have increased when he saw the excuses. The case would look bad if these were the best that Shakspeare could make for his dear friend.

'Nevertheless,' the Poet would seem to say, 'these are the best I can find for you; I know they are poor indeed, but that is no fault of mine. I have always done my utmost to make you look in the eyes of others as you show to me at heart. Indeed, I rather strained a point, you know, for a particular occasion, (in sonnet 70 p. 226). I have excused your follies, and your treatment of Mistress Vernon ingeniously as I could, but you see how little, really, there is to be said.'

In the same way I find evidence that his own feeling fights, all it can under the conditions, against the influence of Essex over the Earl of Southampton. It was purely owing to this influence which sprang out of his love for the Earl of Essex's cousin, that Southampton came so near to losing his head; this he confessed on his Trial. His share in the guilt arose from his personal affection rather than from any rebel ambition. And, I doubt not that Shakspeare, the peerless reader of character, the friend who had such 'precious seeing' in his eye—who loved the Earl of Southampton with such a manly tenderness, had his boding dread and prophesying fear of this influence proving fatal in the end. He must have caught hints, heard whispers of the Earl of Essex and the Lady Rich's intrigue with the Scots' King; it was a family affair, and Southampton had become as one of the family; affianced in friendship and bound in love. He himself was induced to lend his pen once or twice in the Essex

service. But I am sure that he did not like the look of things, and he divined that bad would come of the connexion for the Earl, his friend. This is the fear, this is the bitterness of the sonnets spoken by Elizabeth Vernon to Lady Rich. Her great grief is not only that the lady has stolen or tried to steal her lover, but that she herself should be the cause of his having been brought within range of an influence from which she anticipates danger to the Earl. She is bound to the Lady Rich perforce—she is a prisoner in her power—'pent in thee,' and 'mortgaged' to her will—that is understood—that, she thinks, ought to be enough, without the Earl being made a slave to such a slavery. And she speaks stingingly of the 'bond' which binds them all up together; a 'bond' which is not one of love: says she was cruel herself to bring the Earl into such an entanglement, and it is mean of her cousin, the Lady Rich, to take advantage of what she has unwittingly done—to sue him, distress to the uttermost, him who only became a debtor—placed himself in Lady Rich's power—amatory or political—for Elizabeth Vernon's sake! Here, I think, Shakspeare's own personal feeling recognisably peeps out. The earnest expression, 'let my heart be his guard,' has in it the yearning desire of our Poet to shield his friend from the danger which his quick instinct foreboded. Thus I account for the expression in which Shakspeare calls those who have died on the block the 'fools of Time.' This, if Essex were included, would be unfriendly on the part of his friend, Southampton, who is the speaker in that sonnet. I take it that Essex is included, so far as the writer is concerned, but that the writer's feeling shapes the speaker's expression. The dramatic mask slips aside for a moment, or Shakspeare takes the liberty of telling the Earl what his own estimate of Essex's character and conduct really is. He looked upon him as one of the fools of Time, the restless, impatient, fretful fool—the 'weary

knight,' he called himself—who would not wait for the eternal audit but must force affairs or hurry himself to the last account, and died to make sport for the time. Of course we do not know but what this may have been Southampton's opinion of the man who so foolishly thought to shake a throne which was so firmly founded in the affection, and smilingly surrounded with the strength of a great-hearted people.

The present interpretation will give a verdict against which there is no appeal in the case of some readings that have been hitherto disputed and doubtful. The most obvious way of trying to get out of a difficulty has been to suspect that the printers have given us a corrupt text, but there are many instances in which this method is not at all satisfactory. For example, in the lines of sonnet 70—

> 'So thou be good, slander doth but approve
> Thy worth the greater, being wooed of Time.'

Malone and Steevens both fail to make out the meaning. The former asks, 'What idea does *worth* wooed of, that is by, Time present?' and says, 'Perhaps the Poet means that however slandered his friend may be at present, his worth shall be celebrated in all *future* time.' Steevens replies that he has already shown, on the authority of Ben Jonson, that 'of Time' means of *the then present* one, and says, 'Perhaps we are to disentangle the transposition of the passage thus—"So thou be good, slander being woo'd of Time, doth but approve thy worth the greater"—*i.e.*, if you are virtuous, *slander, being the favourite of the age*, only stamps the stronger mark of approbation on your merit.' Another commentator asks, 'May we not read, "being *wood* of Time?" taking wood for an epithet applied to slander, signifying *frantic*, doing mischief at random. I can make no other sense of the words as printed.' The present reading alone solves the difficulty. The person

addressed being that Earl of Southampton whose marriage with Elizabeth Vernon was forbidden by Queen Elizabeth, who hindered their coming together for some years after the Earl began to court his Mistress. He is spoken of as 'wooed by Time'—not the worth—because he is kept waiting. And whilst waiting, and having to hold the bridle-hand over the impetuous passion of love, the Poet says, 'So you be good and keep pure, Slander shall only serve to prove your worth the greater because of the position in which you are placed, having thus to wait; being thus "wooed of Time!"' We see by sonnet 115 how fearful the writer had been of '*Time's tyranny*' over his friend.

Again, in sonnet 75, the speaker says—

> 'And for the *peace* of you I hold such strife
> As twixt a miser and his wealth is found.'

Malone remarks, 'the context seems to require that we should rather read, "for the *price* of you," or, "for the sake of you." The conflicting passions described by the Poet were not produced by a regard to the ease or quiet of his friend, but by the high value he set on his esteem; yet, as there seems to have been an opposition intended between peace and strife, I do not suspect any corruption in the text.' This is an acute observation. The critic perceives there is something wrong; the character of the conflicting feelings is not suitable to Shakspeare as the speaker, yet he suspects that it goes too deep for a mere change of phrase. He saw as profoundly as could be seen on the personal interpretation. But we shall fathom a little deeper and find a firmer bottom when we have got such a speaker as Southampton addressing his Mistress, and when we grasp his character and the conflict of his affection with the outward circumstances of his life, and see him holding such *strife* with himself for the peace of his beloved.

There is a story which tells how a girl had to run a race with a vase of water on her head and was not to overspill a drop of it if she would win her lover. This would aptly symbol the lot of the Earl in bearing his love and trying to keep it steady through the strife within and the storms without. That is what Shakspeare's line expresses as the pith of his meaning. In this, as in the previous instance, we may see how the Poet has crowded a world of specialty—of human character and external condition—into a single phrase! Nothing could be so perfect for their purpose,—no other words could say so much,—as these which are the perplexities of criticism until we get the right theory of interpretation, and then for the first time we see how procreant, how inclusive, how Shakspearian they are. The touches which are nearest to Nature are just those that make the matter the most remote from us until we have got the proper clue to their meaning.

One conjectural emendation made by Malone is rendered invincible by my theory. Line 9, sonnet 41 (p. 207), reads in the Quarto: 'Ah, me, but yet thou mightst my *seat* forbear.' Malone suggested and printed 'my Sweet' instead of 'my seat,' an expression much more appropriate to the tender appeal of the woman speaker in my interpretation of the sonnet, and still more in the spirit and manner of Shakspeare who would surely not have talked of '*forbearing a seat!*' Mr. Dyce thinks the Quarto reading well supported by a quotation from 'Othello' made by Boaden, in which, however, there is no likeness to *forbearing a seat.* The inner feeling of the sonnet goes to prove more than any outside comparison, else it might be shown *ad infinitum* what a fond and favourite expression of the Poet's this *Sweet* is. In the 'Lover's Complaint' we find 'O, my *Sweet.*' In the 'Two Gentlemen of Verona,' '*Sweet!* except not any.' In the 'Tempest,' 'Sweet, now silence.'

In 'Othello,' 'The sooner *Sweet!* for you.' In 'Lo
Labour's Lost,' 'Take thou this, my Sweet.' In 'Troi
and Cressida,' '*Sweet*, bid me hold my tongue!' In
'Comedy of Errors,' 'Sweet, now make haste.' And
'Romeo and Juliet,' 'Do so, and bid *my Sweet* prepare
chide.'

I might give further examples, but these will suffice
show what I mean by saying that the present reading
the sonnets settles various moot questions once for a
Having got the key to the inmost character, the shapi
spirit of the sonnets, we can now judge of their extern
characteristics and distinguish betwixt the essential a
the accidental; the master-touch of Shakspeare and t
bungling of the printers.

My reading owes but little to my arrangement of t
sonnets. I have not had to pull the book to pieces a
put the sonnets together as the letters of a name mig
be transposed, until a pretty anagram was formed. T
theory necessitated no such ingenious puzzle-work.
did not bring the theory to the sonnets, but the sonne
supplied the theory. They confessed their own secr
though somewhat coyly. They told their own series
stories, and once I had got hold of a story, the su
ject gathered up its own proper parts. So natural
did the mutually dependent portions draw together a
reveal their share of the secret that at times I cou
only wait and see how things were going, only o
serve whilst they combined, as one might watch so
chemical experiment which should produce a result ha
expected and half unexpected, the unforseen portion b
ing by far the most important. Looking back now at t
making out, it does not appear like restoring a statu
piecemeal, after long search for the scattered fragment
so much as getting a glimpse of something buried, di
ging away the earth, and coming upon the statue perfe
almost as it came from the hand of the master. So pa

pably are the facts necessary to my reading all there, and so little does the reading depend on the arrangement of the sonnets!

It will be seen that one of the two greatest changes made occurs in restoring three of the sonnets that have been heretofore printed among the first series. These have been incorporated with the Herbert group; not without sufficient sanction. In the old arrangement, they are numbered 57, 58, and 96; in the present, they will be found the 7th, 12th, and 13th of the Herbert group. If the first copy had been followed exactly, and had not been altered to suit a theory, however silently it was working in the corrector's mind, it must have been perceived ere now that sonnet 57 was one of those that contain puns on the name of 'Will.' The last two lines of this sonnet, as first printed, run thus:—

> 'So true a fool is love, that, in your *Will*,
> Tho' you do anything, he thinks no ill.' [1]

This at once raised a doubt whether the sonnet ought not to have been placed with the later ones. And further looking into the matter, convinced me that this and the other two sonnets mentioned belong, by the nature and phrasing of the passion they express, to the sonnets which I hold to have been written for William Herbert. They are too unmanly in their extravagant protestations to be worthy of the character and the affection of Southampton, as Shakspeare has mirrored them both for us. He knew the value of all such vows.[2] If we trace the Earl right

[1] Various unwarrantable alterations having been made in these sonnets, it becomes necessary to go back to the early copy. Fortunately this has been admirably reprinted from an unrivalled original, by means of photo-zincography. It has been of inestimable use to me.

[2] 'Vows were ever brokers to defiling.'
A Lover's Lament.

'Do not believe his vows, for they are brokers; mere implorators of unholy suits.' *Hamlet.*

through the sonnets devoted to him we shall find the passion is pure; the man is manly. In the first of these, (29—p. 166), we see a noble spirit almost despising itself for having misgiving moods of mind, which are very natural to his condition. The note struck is essentially manly; the love expressed is warm and deep, but it has no whine of sentiment; no abjectness of spirit. His bearing is no more lowered because of his fervour of feeling, than it is because of Fortune's malice. In sonnet 36 (p. 176) he has done something which makes it necessary that for his Mistress's sake he should leave her, lest the 'guilt' which he bewails, and is sorry for, should bring her shame. Here there is the touch of magnanimity in his repentance; nothing weak or grovelling. On the journey, and during his absence, amidst all the loving conceits and tender homeward yearnings, the quaint expression of fond fancies, the touches of jealous thought, the speaker never abases his manhood, and the love is crystal-clear in its depths of purity—shining most clearly when the mind is most disturbed. All through, the passion is of the kind that exalts a man; it tends upward. The manliness of sonnet 49 (p. 233), mixed with the conflicting feelings and dominating over them, is especially fine. So is the self-abnegation and sacrifice of sonnet 88 (p. 233). It is the voice of a true man, and noble lover, even though the dress be a caprice of fashion or of fondness. The love may be like devouring flame, as in sonnet 75 (p. 229), but there is no tendency to eat dirt and delight in it. The lover keeps the attitude and aspect of manhood, and does not wallow. If we would learn how naturally noble is the Earl's love for Elizabeth Vernon, we may feel it in sonnet 95 (p. 236), where it is tried terribly by the 'ill-report' that has reached

'Well, do not swear!'
Juliet to Romeo.

'No, not an oath!
Swear Priests and cowards and men cautelous.'
BRUTUS, *in Julius Cæsar.*

his ears, with regard to her behaviour at Court. How large-hearted and almost parental is the cautioning tenderness! How firm also the belief in the diamond-like nature of his lady's purity, in spite of what the busy tongues have whispered—Only '*take heed, dear heart*, of the large privilege which your beauty and your position confer on you!' In his most piteous pleadings, and most humiliating confessions, it is a noble fellow at heart; whatsoever buffetings of fortune and slips of the foot he may have had, he has borne high that torch of his love, and tried to keep it burning pure and bright. His love has ennobled his manhood—straightened it upward—makes it dilate to a prouder height, as in the farewell sonnet 90, (p. 246), where the poetry is quick with the feeling of a wronged, heroic soul; written in the very life-blood that runs from wounds unjustly given, and having the pathetic force of a strong man in tears.

All through, the passion is perfectly pure, and the sonnets are spoken to a perfectly pure woman by him who has the sole right to caution her when she 'flirts' with others, as we may understand it, and the Court gossips make 'lascivious comments' on what she has been doing in 'sport'—half spite, half fun—when the two lovers were on tiff. Southampton would not have called himself a 'slave,' a 'sad slave' to the woman he loved. He would not have prostrated himself in any unmanly way at her feet like the speaker in sonnets 57-8, (p. 373). His was the love in honour which demanded the 'mutual render, only me for thee.' We know that he *did* think the 'bitterness of absence sour[1]'—*did* dare to 'question with his jealous thought' where she was, and what she was doing. He *did* think ill, and warn her when he heard a certain report of her doings. He was no fool in love, and did not tolerate being befooled. Nor was his the patience

[1] So did Shakspeare in one of his personal sonnets (39—p. 171).

that, 'tame to sufferance,' would 'bide each check' and put up with all kinds of trifling. Nor did he consider that it belonged to his lady to pardon herself for her 'self-doing crimes.' Southampton rightfully held his lady responsible to him for what she had done when he reproached her. Nor did he think that errors were translated to truths when seen in her!

The spirit of these sonnets is one with the rest of Herbert's. The 'sad slave' and wretched vassal of sonnets 57-8, (p. 373), is the 'proud heart's slave' and 'vassal wretch' of sonnet 141, (p. 376). The passion in both is a fire that crumbles the manhood from within. The hectic hue of its lower nature is lurid in every line. The apparent magnanimity is only prostration for a selfish purpose. And the lady's character also is as distinctly seen by the same light. The lover protests too much, offers too much—would fling himself into any puddle, like Raleigh's cloak, for the lady to step on. Then he has no sole right to address her amorously—he must be content to take his place with the rest of Circe's suitors, and his turn in winning her smile!—

> 'I am to wait, tho' waiting so be hell,
> Not blame your pleasure be it ill or well.'

And—

> 'So true a fool is love, that in your 'Will,'
> Tho' you do anything, he thinks no ill.'

It is the same lady who inspired sonnet 96 (p. 370); all the images are stamped in her likeness. Southampton did not think the faults of his lady were graces in her. His jealous thought was for the lady herself, and not on behalf of the innocent 'gazers' whom she might lead astray. Such a suggestion would be utter profanity; the comparison implied, in the 'stern wolf,' an insult! The feeling of sonnet 95 (p. 236), is filled with most anxious love—jealous of 'trifles light as air.' The jealousy of the other is altogether ironical; this is proved by the repetition of the

two lines which were used with so different a meaning in sonnet 36 (p. 176). In every respect the spirit and look of the two sonnets are the perfect opposite of each other; the object of the illustration is exactly reversed. The one lady is *warned against* those vices *that lead astray*, the other is asked *not to use all her strength to lead others astray*. One is all innocence and budding beauty cautioned against her 'sport' on which the gossips talk freely. The other is pleaded with not to play the part of Wolf by trying to look as innocent as the Lamb. Of the one lady we may say, in the words of Lear, 'her eyes are fierce,' but the eyes of the other 'do comfort and not burn!' Of the one sonnet that it has an unhallowed glow, of the other that it wears the white halo of purity.

Next, I have taken three sonnets from the latter, or Herbert series, and restored them to those that illustrate Elizabeth Vernon's jealousy of Lady Rich. And here I may reiterate how satisfactorily this mixture of the sonnets illustrates my reading. Because the sonnets spoken *to* Lady Rich *by* her cousin were sent to her as well as those spoken by William Herbert, and they come back to us mixed up together, both in the 'Passionate Pilgrim' and in Thorpe's Book! That some of Herbert's should be mixed up with Elizabeth Vernon's, points to the probability that the woman addressed so warmly by that lady and William Herbert is one and the same—Elizabeth Vernon's cousin, Lady Rich. In each case, too, the number of sonnets that have changed places is the same.

For the rest, there is proof of the intent to keep the Herbert series apart at the end of the book, the odd sonnets which were written for Southampton still later having been intermediately inserted with the others of his series. The last of these, written in 1603, on the Earl's release from the Tower, was composed after 'Mr. W. H, became Earl of Pembroke,[1] therefore, according to my

[1] He succeeded to the title on the 19th of January, 1601.

view, after the Herbert sonnets were written. It has been thrust in quite at random, still it is with the Southampton sonnets. Then the 126th (p. 170) is a fragment; it is printed in the quarto, with brackets to indicate the missing lines. It was unfinished, *ergo*, never sent, therefore it would be amongst the loose papers of Shakspeare, and this, which belongs by tone and tint to a much earlier period, has been placed last of the Southampton series, and by its aid the Herbert group is marked off into its place apart.

Some of the other batches of sonnets have shifted places, the Marlowe group is one of these. But in each case a dropped sonnet or two remains to indicate the right position and tell us where the others should have been. The greatest confusion has been caused by the odd sonnets that have been let loose like riderless horses in the ranks to come in anywhere hap-hazard. I venture, however, to affirm that I have got them approximately right, both in date and subject, and they will be found arranged in natural sequence with the help of such hints as they contain, so that each group shall best evolve its story.

I now claim for my interpretation that it corrects the errors which have been made by superficial research, and clears up the mystery of Thorpe's inscription; that it recovers for us the long-lost key wherewith Shakspeare unlocked his heart to his 'private friends;' that it fathoms and unfolds the secret histories which have been a sealed book for two centuries and a half and solves one of the most piquant and important of all literary problems; makes the life-spirit that once breathed in these fragments stir and knit themselves together again to become a living body of facts, shaped objectively in some near likeness to the form originally worn in Shakspeare's mind —a veritable presence before which all the phantom falsehoods must fade, and all 'such exsufflicate and blown

surmises' as have attainted the sonnets and wronged the Poet must for ever pass away.

I also claim for my Theory that it is proved by the utmost evidence the nature of the case admits; that the probabilities alone are such as to inspire a feeling of certainty,—that these clothe themselves in a mail of poetic proof, a panoply of circumstantial evidence and confirmatory facts. Attempting so much, it must be very assailable if wrong, only those who think me wrong must be able to set me right. Mere professions of unbelief or nonbelief will be valueless; their expression idle. My facts must be satisfactorily refuted, my Theory disproved simply and entirely, or, in the end, both will be accepted. I cannot expect the result of my explorations to be taken in at first sight, for I myself best appreciate all the intricacies of the process,[1] and the many surprises of my discovery. Some readers will find it hard to believe that a thing like this has been left for me to accomplish. Nevertheless, the thing is done; I can trust a certain spirit in the sonnets, that will go on pleading when my words cease; and, as Shakspeare has written, the 'silence often of pure Innocence persuades when speaking fails.' Even so will his own innocence prevail, and with a perfect trust in the soundness of my conclusions, I leave the matter for the judgement of that great soul of the world which is just.

[1] 'Had we a full biography of the Poet with all his surroundings, we might explain much that is obscure in these remarkable effusions, but *by no process that I can conceive, may we hope to seize the genuine allusions to facts that they contain, and succeed therefrom to illustrate and reanimate the life.*' *Life of Shakspeare*, by William Watkiss Lloyd.

'HIS SUGRED SONNETS AMONG HIS PRIVATE FRIENDS.'

Meres.

My reading of the sonnets gives new meaning to the words of Meres. It makes definite a somewhat vague though sure description. In 1598 he could have spoken only of the Southampton series, but he must have had an inkling of their true nature to have generalized thus successfully. He does not say Shakspeare's personal sonnets to a friend or a Patron. And we have only to substitute the dramatic for the *fugitive* character that has been ascribed to the sonnets, and his words admit all that my interpretation substantiates. They are 'sugred sonnets,' too, which means love-sonnets; known to a circle of private friends, various of whom were concerned in their begettal, and all of whom could be appealed to in witness of their worth. In short Meres identifies the sonnets, up to 1598, as the love-sonnets of Shakspeare written for his private friends. The critic wrote with an eye to these friends. And who were they?

His words mark the very time at which William Herbert had joined the group and become one of those who took an interest in the sonnets. This young lord, from his love of poetry, was probably the one who talked most about the sonnets and made them known. Unquestionably he was one of the 'private friends' referred to in connection

with Shakspeare's sonnets; thus Meres puts us on the track pursued in a previous chapter. The Earl of Southampton was of course the chief of these private friends publicly recognised. That fact is established on the Poet's own personal testimony, independently of the sonnets, although it could not be known apart from the present interpretation of them how secret a bosom-friend he was, how closely linked in habits of intimacy as those 'whose souls do bear an equal yoke of love.'

Southampton being so near and dear a friend of our Poet, it is only the most natural thing in the world that Elizabeth Vernon should be one of his friends also. How could she help being interested in one who had addressed those earlier sonnets to Southampton, urging him to marry, and sought to twine about him so many flowery bands, lead him to the shrine of wedded love, and bring under a nobler direction the riotous energies of youth, so apt to break out of bounds, and run to waste? She must have loved Shakspeare for his fatherly watchfulness of the young Earl's career and conduct, his anxious jealousy of all immoral companions; and it is only natural to conclude that she was one of the 'private friends' of whom Meres makes mention.

So much might have been assumed, if the sonnets had told us no more.

The Lady Rich's link of relationship, as illustrated by *Elizabeth Vernon's jealousy* is very obvious and immediate. She being Mistress Vernon's cousin; her companion in childhood and at Court; the starry object of Sidney's sonnets, having herself acquired a taste for poetry, it was not possible that the sonnets in celebration of Elizabeth Vernon's love and lover could have been unknown to her. According to the abstract reason of things, were there no other evidence, she must have been one of the group alluded to by Meres as acquainted with the sonnets.

It is almost as impossible that the Earl of E
should not have been one of the friends in the cri
mind when he wrote of those amongst whom the son
privately circulated. Essex was something of a poet:
possessed the kindling poetic temperament and
fond of making verses; a lover of literature, and
friend of poets. It was he who sought out Spenser wl
in great distress and relieved him, and, when that p
died, Essex buried him in Westminster Abbey. Bei
as he was, so near a friend of Southampton, it co
scarcely be otherwise than that he should have beer
personal friend of Shakspeare. It is highly probable tl
some of the Poet's dramas were first performed at Es
House. In the chorus at the end of Henry V., Sha
speare introduces a prophecy of the Earl's expected su
cesses in Ireland:

> 'Were now the general of our gracious Empress
> (As in good time he may) from Ireland coming,
> Bringing Rebellion broached upon his sword,
> How many would the peaceful city quit
> To welcome him?'

Also, one of the grounds upon which Essex was behead
was the play which had been performed after it was
tered for the purpose of adding the Deposition Scer
This alteration was in point of fact adduced by Coke
proof of the intentions of the conspirators to dethrone t
Queen. It has been felt ere now that Shakspeare was
some way and to some extent implicated in the Ess
attempt. The sonnets with the present rendering w
supply the missing link of connection. He was know
to Essex as the personal friend of Southampton and
the writer of sonnets on the affection of that Earl f
Essex's cousin, Elizabeth Vernon; in this wise Ess
became one of the private friends to whom the sonne
were known in MS., as mentioned by Meres, and tl
Poet was induced to lend his pen at Southampton's r

quest to serve the Essex cause. John Davies, in his 'Scourge of Folly,' speaks of Shakspeare as having lost some chance of being promoted to the companionship of princes, under the reign of King James:—

> 'Some say, good Will, which I in sport do sing,
> Hadst thou not played some parts in kingly sport,
> Thou hadst bin a companion for a King,
> And been a King among the meaner sort.'

Now, although it is proved by entries in the 'Accounts of the Revels' and by the testimony of Ben Jonson, that Shakspeare's plays were in great favour at the Court of James, yet, it was not as a player and playwright that he would have been welcomed at Court so much as because he was the friend of the late Essex and the living Southampton. James had the warmest greeting for the friends and partisans of Essex and honours were showered upon them. Davies's allusion accords with the tradition that James 'was pleased with his own hand to write an amicable letter to W. Shakspeare, which letter, though now lost, remained long in the hands of Sir William Davenant,' respecting which, Oldys, in a MS. note on his copy of Fuller's Worthies, states that the Duke of Buckingham (John Sheffield, that 'high-reaching Buckingham' who aspired to improve Shakspeare's 'Julius Cæsar' in his 'Death of Marcus Brutus') told Lintot that he had seen it in the possession of Davenant. This consideration respecting Shakspeare's private friends makes the letter a far greater likelihood. Sad to say, the Poet does not seem to have taken much to our Solomon[1] of Royal fools, but to have taken liberties with his character instead.

It will be remembered that the queer love-epistle, over which Lord Rich shook his puzzled head, and which I conjecture may have been the group of sonnets relating to his wife, was being sent by Lady Rich to her brother, the Earl

[1] 'Solomon, the son of David (Rizzio),' he was called by Henry IV. of France.

of Essex, on its way in all probability, back to Elizabeth Vernon. And in the letters and verses of Essex will be found thoughts and expressions which almost prove his acquaintance with the sonnets in MS. In a letter to the Queen, written from Croydon, in the year 1595 or 1596, there occurs a likeness remarkable enough to suggest that Essex was a reader of the sonnets as they were written. The Earl speaks, in absence from the Queen, when he is about to mount his horse for a gallop. He writes: 'The delights of this place cannot make me unmindful of one in whose sweet company I have joyed so much as the happiest man doth in his highest contentment, and *if my horse could run as fast as my thoughts do fly, I would as often make mine eyes rich in beholding the treasure of my love.*'[1] It is superfluous to point out the resemblance to the thought in two of the sonnets spoken by the Earl of Southampton, when on horseback, and in absence from his Mistress. In Essex's letter of advice to the young Earl of Rutland, 1595, there are one or two touches that look like reminiscences of the early sonnets. Shakspeare says to his young friend, sonnet 54, after speaking of his outward graces:

> 'Oh *how much more doth beauty beauteous seem,*
> *By that sweet ornament* that truth doth give,' &c.

Essex tells his young friend—'Some of these things may serve for ornaments, and all of them for delights, but *the greatest ornament is the inward beauty of the mind.*' Again, in a letter to the Queen, dated May, 1600, Essex writes: 'Four whole days have I meditated, most dear and most admired Sovereign, on *these words* that there are two kinds of angels—the one good, the other evil; and that your Majesty wishes your servant to be accompanied with the good;'[2] which sounds very like an echo to the 144th sonnet, beginning—

[1] *Lives of the Devereux Earls of Essex*, vol. i. p. 292.
[2] *Birch's Memoirs of Elizabeth*, vol. ii. p. 445.

'Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still;
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a Woman, coloured ill.'

Of course the Earl might have seen this sonnet in the '*Passionate Pilgrim*,' the year before, but I hold that his acquaintanceship was much closer than that; here is yet stronger proof!

In Shakspeare's 35th sonnet, the speaker *excuses* the person addressed, *because* '*all men make faults;*' and in a sonnet written by the Earl of Essex, 'in his trouble,'[1] the speaker says '*all men's faults do teach her to suspect.*' Thus Essex says the faults of all men teach the Queen to suspect, and Shakspeare's speaker says the faults of all men teach her to forgive. The thought and expression of Shakspeare must have been in the mind of Essex, to have been so curiously turned. The likeness in the two last instances occurs in sonnets belonging to the group devoted to Elizabeth Vernon's jealousy of her cousin, which I suppose to be the epistle of 'Dutch love,' sent by Lady Rich to her brother Robert.

In adducing evidence that Essex was one of Shakspeare's private friends, we have seen that the Poet lent his pen on two occasions for the Earl's service. I have now to suggest another instance. There is a copy of verses in 'England's Helicon,' (1600), reprinted from John Douland's 'First Book of Songs; or, Ayres of four parts, with a Tableture for the Lute.'[2] It is an address to 'Cynthia.'

'My thoughts are winged with hopes, my hopes with love:
Mount love unto the Moon in clearest night!
And say as she doth in the heavens move,
In earth so wanes and waxeth my delight.
And whisper this—but softly—in her ears,
How oft Doubt hangs the head, and Trust sheds tears.

[1] *Bibl. Reg. MS.*, British Museum, 17, B. L.
[2] By Peter Short, 1597, folio.

'And you, my thoughts that seem mistrust to carry,
If for mistrust my Mistress you do blame;
Say, tho' you alter, yet, you do not vary,
As she doth change, and yet remain the same.
Distrust doth enter hearts, but not infect,
And love is sweetest seasoned with suspect.

'If she for this with clouds do mask her eyes,
And make the heavens dark with her disdain;
With *windy sighs* disperse them in the skies,
Or with *thy tears* derobe[1] them into rain.
Thoughts, hopes, and love return to me no more,
Till Cynthia shine as she hath shone before.'

These verses have been ascribed to Shakspeare on the authority of a common-place book, which is preserved in the Hamburgh city library. In this the lines are subscribed W. S., and the copy is dated 1606. The little poem is quite worthy of Shakspeare's sonneteering pen and period. And the internal evidence is sufficient to stamp it as Shakspeare's, for the manner and the music, with their respective felicities, are altogether Shakspearian, of the earlier time. The alliteration in sound and sense; the aerial fancy moving with such a gravity of motion; the peculiar corruscation that makes it hard to determine whether the flash be a sparkle of fancy or the twinkle of wit, are all characteristic proofs of its authorship. No other poet of the period save Spenser could have been thus measuredly extravagant, and he would not have dared the perilous turn on 'mistress' and 'mistrust.'

Steevens pencilled the initials of Fulke Greville (Lord Brooke) against these lines. But we have no warrant for supposing them his, or that his poetic capacity was equal to them.

[1] '*Derobe.*' This fine expression, so illustrative of Shakspeare's art of saying a thing in the happiest way at a word, Mr. Collier suspects ought to be '*dissolve*'!! Even so, if they were allowed, would some of his Critics *dissolve* Shakspeare out of his poetry.

The line,

'And love is sweetest seasoned with suspect'

surely comes from the same mint as

'The ornament of beauty is suspect.' *Sonnet* 70.

Also the line,

'And make the heavens dark with her disdain'

is essentially Shakspearian; one of those which occur at times, after threading the way daintily through intricate windings, sweeping out into the broader current with a full stroke of music and imagination, such as this from the 18th sonnet:

'*But thy eternal summer shall not fade.*'

Then the 'windy sighs,' and the *tears for rain* are just as recognisable as a bit of the Greek mythology. Here is one of the Poet's pet trinkets of fancy. With him sighs and tears, 'poor fancy's followers!' are sorrow's *wind* and *rain*.[1]

I have not the least doubt of the poem being Shakspeare's own, and my suggestion is that it was written for the Earl of Essex, at a time when the Queen, '*Cynthia*,' was not shining on him with her favouring smile, and

[1] 'Storming her world with *sorrow's wind and rain*.'
A Lover's Lament.
'The *winds thy sighs*.'
Romeo and Juliet. Act iii. sc. 5.
'We cannot call her *winds* and *waters*, *sighs* and *tears*.'
Antony and Cleopatra.
'Where are my *tears*? *Rain, rain*, to lay this *wind*.'
Troilus and Cressida.
'Give not a *windy* night a *rainy* morrow.' *Sonnet* 90. (*i. e.* give not a night of sighs a morning of tears).
'The sun not yet thy *sighs* from heaven clears.'
Romeo and Juliet. Act ii. sc. 3.
In these last the mental likeness is very striking.

that Essex had it set to music, by Douland, to be sung at Court.

The group of Shakspeare's private friends, for whom the sonnets were written, being thus far identified, it remains to be seen whether, by way of further corroboration, we can follow any trace of their characters in the plays. We may be quite sure that Shakspeare was hard at work, whilst, to all appearance, merely at play in the sonnets. He would mark the workings of Time and Fortune on those in whom he took so tender an interest, wistfully as a bird watches the mould upturned by the plough, and pick up the least germs of fact fresh from life, and treasure up the traits of his friends for a life beyond life in his dramas. He had followed Southampton's course year after year anxiously as Goethe watched his cherry-tree in patient hope of seeing fruit at last; and one season the spring-frosts killed the blossom, another year the birds ate the buds, then the caterpillars destroyed the green leaves, and next there came a blight, and still he watched and hoped to see the ripened fruit!

Shakspeare's finest and most impressive characters are so real and profound, because of the amount of real life at the heart of them, that breathes beneath the robe of other times; the mask of other names. Living men and women move and have their being in his dramas. And the greatest of all reasons why his characters exist for all time is, because he so closely studied the men and women of his own time, and wrote with one hand touching warm reality, the other on the pen. Some of those who must have come the nearest home to him, would be the 'private friends' of his 'sugred sonnets.'

For example, we might assume without further proof that if the Lady Rich sat to Shakspeare for some of his sonnet-sketches, she would be certain to reappear, full-picture, in some of his plays. She was too rare a product of Nature not to leave an impress on the mould of his

imagination that would not easily pass away—an image that would give its similitude to characters afterwards fashioned by the Poet. If he wrote about her on account of others, we may be sure he did on his own. Sidney had thus challenged the poets of his age—

> 'But if (both for your love and skill) your name
> You seek to nurse at fullest breasts of Fame,
> Stella behold! and then begin to indite.' *Sonnet* 15.

And Shakspeare was not in the least likely to neglect the hint.

Where the character was less marked, it would still be sufficient for suggestion, and with him initials were enough; from a small seed he could rear the consummate flower. His promises of immortality made to the Earl of Southampton in the sonnets, have had such fulfilment in the plays as the world but little dreams of. Every heroic trait and chivalric touch in the Earl's nature would be carefully gathered up to reappear enriched in some such favourite type of English character as King Henry V. Who but Henry Wriothesley, the gay young gallant, the chivalrous soldier, the *beau sabreur* and dashing leader of horse, could have lived in the mind's eye of Shakspeare when he wrote—

> 'I saw young Harry with his beaver on,
> His cuisses on his thighs, gallantly armed,
> Rise from the ground like feathered Mercury!
> He vaulted with such ease into his seat,
> As if an angel dropped down from the clouds,
> To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus
> And witch the world with noble horsemanship.'

Here we have the very man to the life, named by name, just as the Poet had seen him mount horse for the wars when he bade him farewell and triumphed in his pride. The words are put into Sir Richard Vernon's mouth, but it is Shakspeare's heart that speaks in them. Camden

relates that about the end of March (1599) Essex set forward for Ireland, and was 'accompanied out of London with a fine appearance of nobility and the most cheerful huzzas of the common people.' And, seeing that Shakspeare in Henry V. makes his allusion to Essex's coming home, I infer that in Henry IV. he pictures Southampton as he saw him at starting, on a similar occasion, dressed in heroic splendours, to his proud loving eyes; the noblest, the fieriest of the troop of young gallants, all noble, all on fire, 'all clinquant, all in gold!' When Rowland White saw Southampton off for Ireland, in 1600, he could not help exclaiming, 'He is a very fine gentleman, and loves you (Sir Robert Sidney) well.'

Also, the troubled history of Southampton's love for Elizabeth Vernon, and the opposition of Fortune, much dwelt upon in the sonnets, could not fail to give a more tragic touch to the play, a more purple bloom to the poetry, when the subject was the sorrow of true but thwarted love. I fancy that Shakspeare was working a good deal from the life and the love of his friends when he wrote his 'Romeo and Juliet;' the Queen's opposition to their marriage standing in the place of that ancient enmity of the two Houses. There is much of Southampton's character and fate in Romeo the unlucky, doomed to be crossed in his dearest wishes, whose name was writ in sour Misfortune's book. The Poet must have often preached patience to his friend, like the good Friar Lawrence, and at the same time apprehended with foreboding feeling and presaging fear some tragic issue from the clashing of such a temperament with so trying a fortune. There are expressions pointing to the lady of the early sonnets as being in the Poet's mind when he was thinking of Juliet. A remarkable image in the 27th sonnet is also made use of in Romeo's first exclamation on seeing Juliet for the first time. In the sonnet the lady's remembered beauty is said to be 'like a jewel hung in ghastly night,' which

'Makes black Night beauteous, and her old face new.'

Romeo says—

'Her beauty hangs upon the cheek of Night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear.'

Considering who the sonnets were written for, this figure reappears in too pointed a way not to have some suggestive significance. Looked at in this light, the question of Juliet—

'Art thou not Romeo and a Montague?'

comes upon us with luminous force; for the fact is, that Southampton was a Montague by the mother's side, she being Mary, daughter of Anthony Browne, fair Viscount Montague, which fact calls to mind what has always seemed a little bit of the Nurse's nonsense in the fourth scene of the Second Act of this drama:—

'*Nurse.*—Doth not rosemary and Romeo *both begin with a letter?*

Romeo.—Ay, Nurse; what of that? both with an R.

Nurse.—Ah, mocker! that's the dog's name: R is for the — No—*I know it begins with some other letter*: and *she hath the prettiest sententious of it, of you and Rosemary,* that it would do you good to hear it.

Romeo.—Commend me to thy lady.'

Now, here is more meant than meets the eye. The Nurse is being used. There is something that she does not quite fathom, yet her lady does. She is prettily wise over a pleasant conceit. Romeo understands it too, if we may judge by his judicious answer. The Nurse, however, knows there is *another letter* involved. There is a name that begins with a different letter to the one sounded, but this name is not in the Play, therefore it cannot be Rosemary which the Nurse knows does not begin with an 'R.' Name and letter have to do with Romeo, the lady

sees how, but the Nurse, who started to tell the lover a good joke about Juliet's playing with his name, is puzzled in the midst of it; can't make it out exactly, but it's a capital joke, and it would do his heart good to see how it pleases the lady, who is learned in the matter, though she, the Nurse, be no scholar! We shall find a meaning for the first time if Southampton be the original of Romeo, and make sense of the Nurse's nonsense by supposing, as we well may, that here is an *aside* on the part of the Poet to his friends, and that the name which begins with *another letter* than the one first sounded is Wriothesley!

This bit of Shakspeare's fun has perplexed his commentators most amusingly; their hunt after the Dog and the 'dog's letter R' being the best fun of all. The only 'dog' in the Nurse's mind is that 'mocker' of herself, the audacious lover of her young lady. Romeo has put her out of reckoning by saying 'both with an R.' And the Nurse, with the familiarity of an old household favourite, and a chuckle of her amorous old heart, says, 'Ah, you dog, you, 'R' is for 'Rosemary,' and also for— *no, there's some other letter*, and my lady knows all about it; only she says this half to herself, as she tries to catch the missing meaning of her speech, the very point of her story. 'Rosemary' is merely the herb of that name. '*That's* for remembrance' with Juliet, not for the name of a dog! The second Dog is Tyrwhitt's, not Shakspeare's.

In the present instance the Poet is using the Nurse for the amusement of his friends, just as he uses Mrs. Quickly and Dogberry for ours; that is, by making ignorance a dark reflector of light for us; causing them to hit the mark of his meaning for us whilst missing it for themselves; thus we are flattered and they are befooled.

It is also exceedingly probable that in the previous scene of this same act we have another *aside* which glances at my reading of the sonnets, if only for a moment, the twinkling of an eye, yet full of merry meaning.

Mercutio says of Romeo in love, 'Now is he for the numbers Petrarch flowed in: Laura to his lady was but a kitchen-wench; marry, *she had a better love* (*or friend*) *to be-rhyme her*.' Supposing my theory to be the right one, the perfection of the banter here—as between Shakspeare and Southampton—would lie in an allusion unperceived by the audience, but well known to poet and patron, as relating to the sonnets which were then being written. This would be no more than his making a public allusion to the sonnets, as work in hand, when he dedicated the poem of 'Lucrece.' Besides, Shakspeare may be the original of Mercutio, (see Ben Jonson's description of his liveliness!) he may even be playing the part on the stage to Burbage's Romeo, and the joke at his own and his friend's expence would be greatly heightened by an arch look at Southampton sitting on the stage in 'the Lords' places, on the very rushes where the Comedy is to dance.'[1] Many things would be conveyed to the initiated friends by the Poet's humour thus slyly playing bo-peep from behind the dramatic mask.

I have already suggested that the Rosaline of 'Love's Labour's Lost,' and the lady of the latter sonnets are both drawn from the same original; the Lady Rich. And I believe that to the jealousy of Elizabeth Vernon, as pourtrayed in the sonnets, we owe one of the loveliest conceptions that ever sprang on wings of splendour from the brain of man, the 'Midsummer Night's Dream;' dreamed by the potent magician, when he lay down as it were apart from the stir and the strife of reality, under the boughs of that Athenian wood; a region full of fantasy! and in the mystic time, and on the borderland of life, the fairies came floating to him under the moonlight, over the moss, on divers-coloured, dew-besilvered plumes, lighting up the leafy coverts with their glow-worm lamps, moving about him in tiny attendance, to do

[1] *Gull's Handbook.*

his spiritings as they filled the sleeping forest with the richness of a dream.

The play and the bye-play are the very *forgery* of Jealousy; the jealousy of mortals mirrored with most exquisite mockery in fairy world.

In the sonnets we have two women wooing one man, and in the play two men are made to pursue the love of one woman. Puck, speaking of the effect of the flower-juice squeezed on the eyes, says,

'Then will two at once woo one.'

Only the parts being reversed, the two that were wooing Hermia so passionately, are compelled to follow Helena as persistently. The object too of Oberon's sending for the magic flower, was, in its human aspect, to turn a false love into true, but by a mistake on the part of Puck, that was intentional on the part of the Poet, a true love is subjected to a false glamour, through the 'misprision' that ensues. A sweet Athenian lady is in love with a disdainful youth, who has capriciously left her to pursue the betrothed of another, and thus gives the leading movement to the love-*fugue*. 'Anoint his eyes,' says Oberon, that he, in fact,

'May be as he was wont to be,
And see as he was wont to see.'

And Helena, groping through the glimmering night, half-blind with tears, in pursuit of her truant lover, chides almost in the same language as the lady of the sonnets—

'Fie, Demetrius!
Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex;
We cannot fight for love as men may do;
We should be wooed, and were not made to woo.'

The Poet having written sonnets upon Elizabeth Vernon's jealousy of her cousin Lady Rich, found enough reality, and no more, in it to *play* with the subject. So the pain and the petulance, the pleadings and reproaches, all passed

away into this haunted realm of his imagination. He *dreamed* about it, and the fact of the day became the fiction of the night; this being the transfigured shape it took in the spirit-world of things—a rainbow of most ethereal beauty, that rose up in wonder-land, after the April storm of smiles and tears had passed from the face of real love, in the human world!—an arch of triumph, under which the friends were to pass, on their way into the world of wedded life. All fairy-land is lit up for the illustration of jealousy, and we have the love-tiffs, fallings-out, and makings-up of the Poet's friends, represented in the most delicate disguise.

His fancy has been tickled, and his humour is all alive with an elfish sparkle. He will make the wee folk mimic the quarrels of these human mortals; the fairy jealousy shall be just theirs, translated to the realm of the quaint spirits, who are a masked humanity in miniature. In dream-land, too, the Poet can have his own way, and turn the tables on the facts of real life. He will play Oberon, and use the charmed juice for a 'fair maid's sake.' The lover shall be punished, that was of late so mad for Hermia, and have his eyes opened by a truer love-sight, and be rejected by Helena, as the breather of false vows. The lady that drew all hearts and eyes shall be forsaken and left forlorn. In the sonnets, poor Helena has to reproach her cousin for stealing her lover from her side; Hermia is there, the 'gentle thief.' In the play this is reversed, and Hermia charges Helena for the theft.

> 'O me! you juggler! you canker-worm!
> You thief of love! What! have you come by night
> And stolen my Love's heart from him?'
> *Midsummer Night's Dream*, act i. sc. 2.

Many touches tend to show that Hermia is Lady Rich, and Helena, Elizabeth Vernon. The complexion of Hermia is again aimed at, in her being called a 'raven;' complexion and spirit both, in the 'tawny Tartar.' The

eyes of *Stella* are likewise distinguishable in 'Hermia's *sphery* eyne,' and in 'your eyes are *lodestars!*' also in these lines:

> 'Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies;
> For *she hath blesséd and attractive eyes*;
> How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:
> If so, my eyes are oftener washed than hers.

Hers too, I think, was the black brow of which we have heard so much, the 'brow of Egypt,' in which 'the Lover' could see 'Helen's beauty.'

The difference in character and in height of person agrees with all we know, and can fairly guess, of the two cousins. Elizabeth Vernon—Helena—is the taller of the two; she is also the most timid, and, as in the sonnets, fearful of her cousin, who 'was a vixen when she went to school,' and who is fierce for her size. In the 28th sonnet, Elizabeth Vernon is thus addressed:

> 'I tell the Day, to please him thou art bright,
> And dost him grace when clouds do blot the heaven;
> So flatter I the swart-complexioned Night;
> *When sparkling stars tire not, thou gild'st the even.*'

In the drama, Lysander exclaims,

> 'Fair Helena, *who more engilds the Night,*
> *Than all the fiery oes and eyes of light!*'

Again, in sonnet 109, Southampton says, on the subject of his wanderings in the past, and with a special allusion to some particular occasion, when the two lovers had suffered a 'night of woe'—this Play being a Dream of that 'Night' in which the Poet held the lovers to have been touched with a Midsummer madness!—

> '*As easy might I from myself depart,*
> *As from my soul, which in thy breast doth lie:*
> *That is my home of love: if I have ranged,*
> *Like him that travels, I return again.*'

And in the Drama the repentant lover, when the glamour has gone from his eyes, says of the lady whom he has been following fancy-sick—

'Lysander keep thy Hermia. I will none:
If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.
My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourned,
And now to Helen it is home returned,
There to remain.'

Lastly, the early and familiar acquaintanceship of the two cousins, Lady Rich and Elizabeth Vernon, is perfectly pourtrayed in these lines. Helena is expostulating on the cruel bearing of Hermia towards her—

'O, is it all forgot?
All school-days' friendship, childhood-innocence?
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
As if our hands, our sides, voices and minds,
Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
Like to a double-cherry, seeming parted,
But yet an union in partition;
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem,
So with two seeming bodies but one heart.'
Midsummer Night's Dream, act iii. sc. 2.

Mr. Halpin, in 'Oberon's Vision, illustrated,'[1] has conclusively shown the 'little western flower' of the Allegory to be the representative of Lettice Knollys, Countess of Essex, whom the Earl of Leicester married after he had shot his bolt with her Majesty and missed his mark of a royal marriage.[2] My reading dovetails with his, to the

[1] *Shakspeare Society's Papers*, 1843.

[2] My interpretation of Oberon's remark—
'That very time I saw, *but thou could'st not*'—
is to this effect:—
Shakspeare is treating Puck for the moment, as a personification of his own boyhood. '*Thou remembrest* the rare vision we saw at the "Princely Pleasures" of Kenilworth!' 'I remember,' replies Puck. So that he was

strengthening of both. But, Mr. Halpin does not explain *why* this 'little flower' should play so important a part; why it should be the chief object and final cause of the whole allegory, so that the royal range of the imagery is but the mere setting; why it should be the only link of connexion betwixt the allegory and the play. This must be because it has more relationship to characters in the 'drama' than to persons out of it. My rendering alone will show why and how. The allegory was introduced on account of these two cousins; the 'little western flower' being mother to Lady Rich, and aunt to Elizabeth Vernon. The Poet pays the Queen a compliment by the way, but, his allusion to the love-shaft loosed so impetuously by Cupid is only for the sake of marking where it fell, and bringing in the Flower.

It is the little flower alone that is necessary to his present purpose, for he is entertaining his 'private friends' more than catering for the amusement of the Court. This personal consideration will explain the tenderness of the treatment. Such delicate dealing with such a subject was not likely to win the royal favour; the 'imperial votaress' never forgave the 'little western flower' and only permitted her to come to Court once, and then for a private interview, after her Majesty learned that Lettice Knollys was really Countess of Leicester. Shakspeare himself must have had sterner thoughts about the lady, but this was not the time to show them: he had introduced the subject for poetic beauty, not for poetic justice. He brings in his allegory, then, on account of those who are related to the 'little

then present, and saw the sights and all the outer realities of the pageant. But the Boy of eleven could not see what Oberon saw, the matrimonial mysteries of Leicester: the lofty aim of the Earl at a Royal prize, and the secret intrigue then pursued by him and the Countess of Essex. Whereupon the Fairy King unfolds in Allegory what he before saw in vision, and clothes the naked skeleton of fact in the very bloom of beauty, with touches and tints delicate as those of Spring, embroidering a grave with flowers.

western flower,' and in his use of the flower he is playfully tracing up an effect to its natural cause. The mother of Lady Rich is typified as the flower called 'Love-in-Idleness,' the power of which is so potent that—

> 'The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid,
> Will make a man or woman madly doat
> Upon the next live creature that it sees.'

And the daughter was like the mother. 'It comes from his mother,' said the Queen, with a sigh, speaking of the dash of wilful devilry and the Will-o'-the-wisp fire in the Earl of Essex's blood! Shakspeare, in a smiling mood, says the very same of Lady Rich and her love-in-idleness. 'It comes from her mother!' She, too, was a genuine 'light-o'-love' and possessed the qualities attributed to the 'little western flower'—the vicious virtue of its juice, the power of glamourie by communicating the poison with which Cupid's arrow was touched when dipped for deadliest work.

These she derives by inheritance; and these she has exercised in real life on the lover of her cousin. The juice of 'love-in-idleness' has been dropped into Southampton's eyes, and in the play its enchantment has to be counteracted. Here I part company with Mr. Halpin. '*Dian's bud*,' the '*other herb*,' does not represent *his* Elizabeth, the Queen, but *my* Elizabeth, the 'faire Vernon.' It cannot be made to fit the Queen in any shape. If the herb of more potential spell, 'whose liquor hath this *virtuous* property' that it can correct all errors of sight, and 'undo this hateful imperfection' of the enamoured eyes—

> 'Dian's bud, o'er Cupid's flower,
> Hath such force and blessèd power.'

were meant for the Queen; it would have no application whatever in life, and the allegory would not *impinge* on the play. Whose eyes did this virtue of the Queen purge

from the grossness of wanton love? Assuredly not Leicester's, and as certainly not those of the Lady Lettice. Indeed, if these had been so changed, why, their eyes could not have 'rolled with *wonted* sight.' The facts of real life would have made the allusion a sarcasm on the Queen's virgin force and 'blessed power,' such as would have warranted Iago's expression, '*blessed fig's-end!*' If it be applied to Titania and Lysander, what had the Queen to do with them, or they with her? The allegory will not go thus far; the link is missing that should connect it with the drama. No. 'Dian's bud' is not the Queen. It is the emblem of Elizabeth Vernon's true love and its virtue in restoring the 'precious seeing' to her lover's eyes which had in the human world been doating wrongly. It symbols the triumph of love-in-earnest over love-in-idleness; the influence of that purity which is here represented as the offspring of Dian.

Only thus can we find that meeting-point of Queen and Countess, of Cupid's flower and Dian's bud, in the play which is absolutely essential to the existence and the oneness of the work; only thus can we connect the cause of the mischief with its cure. The allusion to the Queen was but a passing compliment; the influence of the '*little western flower*' and its necessary connection with persons in the drama are as much the *sine quâ non* of the play's continuity and development as was the jealousy of Elizabeth Vernon a motive-incident in the poetic creation.

Such, I believe, is the Genesis of this exquisite Dramatic Dream; the little grub of fact out of which the wonder rose on rainbow wings; an instance of the way in which Shakspeare effected his marvellous transformations and made the mortal put on immortality. For a moment we have caught the wizard at his work and seen how he attained that *remoteness* when dealing with familiar things which can invest mere earth, so common to us in its nearness, with a lustre in the distance as of a lighted star.

I do not doubt that this dainty drama was written with the view of celebrating the marriage of Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon; for them his Muse put on the wedding raiment of such richness; theirs was the bickering of jealousy so magically mirrored, the nuptial path so bestrewn with the choicest of our Poet's flowers, the wedding bond that he so fervently blest in fairy guise. He is, as it were, the familiar friend at the marriage-feast who gossips cheerily to the company of a perplexing passage in the lovers' courtship, which they can afford to smile at now!

The play was probably composed some time before the marriage took place, at a period when it may have been thought the Queen's consent could be obtained, but not so early as the commentators have imagined. I have ventured the date of 1595.[1]

'Of all Shakspeare's historical plays,' says Coleridge, '"Antony and Cleopatra" is the most wonderful. Not one in which he has followed history so minutely, and yet there are few in which he impresses the notion of angelic strength so much—perhaps none in which he impresses it more strongly. This is greatly owing to the manner in which the fiery force is sustained throughout, owing to the numerous momentary flashes of nature counteracting the historic abstraction.'

There were reasons for this vivid look of life and warmth of colour unknown to Coleridge. It is not merely

[1] Perhaps it was one of the Plays presented before Mr. Secretary Cecil and Lord Southampton, when they were leaving London for Paris, in January, 1598, at which time, as Rowland White relates, the Earl's marriage was secretly talked of. The same writer tells us, that on the 14th of the next month, there was a grand entertainment given at Essex House. There were present, the Ladies Leicester, Northumberland, Bedford, Essex, and Rich; also Lords Essex, Rutland, Mountjoy, and others. 'They had two Plays, which kept them up till One o'clock after Midnight.' (*Sidney Memoirs*, vol. ii p. 91). Southampton was away, but this brings us upon the group of 'Private Friends' gathered, in all likelihood, to witness a private performance of two of our Poet's Plays.

life-like, but real life itself. The model from which Shakspeare drew his Cleopatra was, like his statue of Hermione, a very real woman all a-thrill with life: 'The fixure of her eye hath motion in't!' Ripe life is ruddy on the lip; life stirs in the breath. A little closer, and we exclaim with Leonatus, '*Oh; she's warm!*'

There was a woman in the North, whom Shakspeare had known, quite ready to become his life-figure, for this siren of the east; her name was Lady Rich. A few touches to make the hair dark, and give the cheek a browner tint, and the change was wrought. The soul was already there, apparelled in befitting bodily splendour. She had the tropical exuberance, the rich passionate life, and reckless impetuous spirit; the towering audacity of will, and breakings-out of wilfulness; the sudden change from stillness to storm, from storm to calm, which kept her life in billowy motion, on which her spirit loved to ride triumphing, although others went to wreck; the cunning—past man's thought—to play as she pleased upon man's pulses; the infinite variety that custom could not stale; the freshness of feeling that age could not wither; the magic to turn the heads of young and old, the wanton and the wise! Her 'flashes of nature' were lightning-flashes! A fitting type for the witch-woman, who kissed away kingdoms, and melted down those immortal pearls of price—the souls of men—to enrich the wine of her luxurious life! The very 'model for the devil to build mischief on,' or for Shakspeare to work by, when setting that 'historic abstraction' all aglow with a conflagration of passionate life, and making old Nile's swart image of beauty in bronze breathe in flesh and blood and sensuous shape once more to personify eternal torment in the most pleasurable guise. The hand of the English-woman flashes its whiteness, too, in witness, when she offers to give her 'bluest veins to kiss,' forgetful that it was black with 'Phœbus' amorous pinches.' The

'lascivious Grace, *in whom all ill well shows.*' Sonnet 40, (p. 210), is that 'serpent of old Nile,' who was 'cunning, past man's thought;' she who is asked in sonnet 150, (p. 377)—

> 'Whence hast thou *this becoming of things ill*
> That in the very refuse of thy deeds,
> There is such strength and warrantise of skill
> That in my mind thy worst all best exceeds?'

is the same person, of whom it is said in the tragedy, 'the *vilest things become themselves in her;*' the lady addressed in sonnet 96, (p. 370)—

> 'Thou mak'st faults graces that to thee resort,
> As on the finger of a thronéd Queen,
> The basest jewel will be well-esteemed;
> So are those errors that in thee are seen
> To truths translated, and for true things deemed—'

is one with the

> 'Wrangling Queen,
> Whom everything becomes, to chide, to laugh,
> To weep: whose every passion fully strives
> To make itself, in thee, fair, and admired!'

This veri-similitude is not casual, it comes from no inadvertence of expression, but goes to the life-roots of a personal character, so unique, that the Poet on various occasions drew from one original—the Lady Rich.

In the same way I think Shakspeare wrought from the character of Lady Rich's brother, in creating one of his most perplexing personages. The puzzle of history, called 'Essex,' was well calculated to become that problem of the critic, called 'Hamlet.' This has been before suggested.[1] The characters and circumstances of both have much in common. The father of Essex was popularly

[1] In '*Court and Society from Elizabeth to Anne.*'

believed to have been poisoned by the man who afterwards married the widow. Then the burden of action imposed on a nature divided against itself, the restlessness of spirit, the wayward melancholy, the fantastic sadness, the disposition to look on life as a sucked orange,—all point to such a possibility. We can match Hamlet's shifting moods of mind with those of the 'weary knight,' heart-sore and fancy-sick, as revealed in letters to his sister, Lady Rich. In one of these he writes—

'This lady hath entreated me to write a fantastical . . . . but I am so ill with my pains, and some other secret causes, as I will rather choose to dispraise those affections with which none but women apes and lovers are delighted. To hope for that which I have not, is a vain expectation, to delight in that which I have, is a deceiving pleasure: to wish the return of that which is gone from me, is womanish inconstancy. Those things which fly me I will not lose labour to follow. Those that meet me I esteem as they are worth, and leave when they are nought worth. I will neither brag of my good-hap nor complain of my ill; for secrecy makes joys more sweet, and I am then most unhappy, when another knows that I am unhappy. I do not envy, because I will do no man that honour to think he hath that which I want; nor yet am I not contented, because I know some things that I have not. Love, I confess to be a blind god. Ambition, fit for hearts that already confess themselves to be base. Envy is the humour of him that will be glad of the reversion of another man's fortune; and revenge the remedy of such fools as in injuries, know not how to keep themselves aforehand. Jealous I am not, for I will be glad to lose that which I am not sure to keep. If to be of this mind be to be fantastical, then join me with the three that I first reckoned, but if they be young and handsome, with the first.

Your brother that loves you dearly.'[1]

Again he writes to his 'dear sister:'

'I am melancholy-merry; sometimes happy, and often discontented. The Court is of as many humours as the rainbow

[1] *Court and Society from Elizabeth to Anne*, vol. i. p. 290.

hath colours. The time wherein we live is more inconstant than woman's thoughts, more miserable than old age itself, and breedeth both people and occasions like itself, that is, violent, desperate, and fantastical. Myself, for wondering at other men's strange adventures, have not leisure to follow the ways of mine own heart, but by still resolving not to be proud of any good that can come, because it is but the favour of chance; nor do I throw down my mind a whit for any ill that shall happen, because I see that all fortunes are good or evil as they are esteemed.'[1]

These read exactly like expressions of Hamlet's weariness, indifference and doubt, as for example, this sighing utterance, 'How weary, flat, stale and unprofitable, seem to me all the uses of this world!' And this:

'Indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me as a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire; why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours . . . . Man delights not me; no nor woman neither.'

There is the same worm at the root, the same fatal fracture running through the character, the same vacillation and glancing aside the mark, that tendency to zigzag which made Coleridge swerve from side to side of his walk in the Garden, because he never could make up his mind to go direct. It strikes me that the subject of 'Hamlet' was forced on Shakspeare as a curious study from the life of his own time, rather than chosen from a rude remote age for its dramatic aptitude. For the character is undramatic in its very nature; a passive, contemplative part, rather than an acting one. It has no native hue of Norse resolution, but is sicklied over with the 'pale cast' of modern thought. As with Essex, the life is hollow at heart; dramatic only in

[1] *Court and Society from Elizabeth to Anne*, vol. i. p. 207.

externals It is tragic permissively, not compulsorily. The Drama does not solve any riddle of life for us, it is the represented riddle of a life that to this day remains unread. Doubtless, it would be the death of many fine-spun theories and rare subtleties of insight regarding Shakspeare's *intentions*, if we could only see how contented he was to let Nature have her way, and trusted the realities which she had provided; steadily keeping to his *terra firma*, and letting his followers seek after him all through cloudland.

When the Poet put these words into the mouth of Ophelia—'Bonnie Sweet Robin is all my joy,' they did not mean, I think, to refer merely to the tune of that name. 'Sweet Robin' was the pet name by which the Mother of Essex addressed him in her letters. One wonders whether either of the Court ladies—Elizabeth Southwell, Mary Howard, Mrs. Russell, or the 'fairest Brydges'—whose names have been coupled with that of Essex, gave any hint of 'Ophelia' to Shakspeare?

There is no likeness, however, betwixt Horatio and the Earl of Southampton; the philosophic calm of the one is totally opposed to the other's natural fervency of temperament, and the dear friend of Essex cannot possibly be one with the friend of Hamlet. The Prince's description of Horatio determines that!

> 'Thou hast been
> As one in suffering all, that suffers nothing;
> A Man, that Fortune's buffets and rewards
> Hast ta'en with equal thanks!
> And blest are those
> Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled
> That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger,
> To sound what stop she please.'

Malone supposed that our Poet, in writing the last words of Horatio—

'Now cracks a noble heart—good night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!'

had in mind the last words of Essex in his prayer on the scaffold—'And when my soul and body shall part, *send thy blessed angels, to be near unto me, which may convey it to the joys of heaven.*'

But 'Hamlet' is a somewhat earlier play than Malone supposed. It must have been the last words of Horatio that were in the last thoughts of Essex, or else they were so familiar to him for personal reasons, as to shape his last expressions unconsciously to himself.

It is in the play of King Henry VIII. that we may find the last words of Essex worked up by the dramatist, and with great fulness of detail. The speech of Buckingham on his way to execution, includes almost every point of Essex's address on the scaffold, as may be seen by the following comparison.

ESSEX.	BUCKINGHAM.
'I pray you all to pray with me and for me.'	'All good people pray for me.'
'I beseech you and the world to have a charitable opinion of me, for my intention towards her Majesty, whose death, *upon my salvation*, and *before God*, I protest I never meant, nor violence to her person.'	'I have this day received a Traitor's judgment, And by that name must die: yet *heaven bear witness*; And, if I have a conscience, let it sink me, Even as the axe falls, *if I be not faithful.*'
'Yet I confess I have received an honourable trial, and am justly condemned.'	'I had my trial, and must needs say a noble one.'

ESSEX.

'I beseech you all to join yourselves with me in prayer, not with eyes and lips only, but with lifted up hearts and minds to the Lord for me . . O God, grant me the inward comfort of Thy Spirit. *Lift my soul* above all earthly cogitations, *and when my soul and body shall part,* send Thy blessed angels to be near unto me, which may convey it to the joys of heaven.'

BUCKINGHAM.

'You few that loved me,
And dare be bold to weep for Buckingham,
His noble friends and fellows, whom to leave
Is only bitter to him; the only dying;
Go with me like good angels to the end;
And as the long divorce of steel falls on me,
Make of your prayers one sweet sacrifice,
And *lift my soul* to heaven.'

ESSEX.

'I desire all the world to forgive me, even as I do freely and from my heart forgive all the world.'

BUCKINGHAM.

'I as free forgive you,
As I would be forgiven: I forgive all.'

ESSEX.

'The Lord grant her Majesty a prosperous reign, and a long, if it be his will. O Lord, grant her a wise and understanding head! O Lord, bless Her!'

BUCKINGHAM.

'Commend me to his grace.
My vows and prayers
Yet are the King's; and, till my soul forsake,
Shall cry for blessings on him! may he live,
Longer than I have time to tell his years!
Ever beloved and loving may his rule be.'

Even so did he who held that the players were the 'abstract and brief chronicles of the time,' and that the dramatist should show the 'very age and body of the time, its form and pressure,' deal with the realities around him; the men whom he knew, the scenes which he saw, the events as they occurred; although these, when seen

through the luminous ether of his poetry, and heard in his larger utterance, are often so changed in their translated shape, that they are as difficult to identify as it may be to recognise in another world many glorified spirits that once dwelt obscure and dim in this. Also the personages live so intensely in his Poetry, who have only come to us as phantoms in history, that it is no marvel we should have lost their likeness. In the present instance, the identification of the fact in the fiction is easy, for not only has the Poet used the thoughts and expressions of Essex and dramatised his death-scene, but he has also rendered the very incidents of Essex's trial, his bearing before his Peers, and given an estimate of persons and circumstances exact in application.

First Gent. 'To his accusations
He pleaded still not guilty, and alleged
Many sharp reasons to defeat the law.
The King's Attorney on the contrary,
Urged on the examinations, proofs, confessions
Of divers witnesses; which the Duke desired
To have brought *viva voce* to his face:
At which appeared against him his surveyor;
Sir Gilbert Peck, his chancellor; and John Carr,
Confessor to him; with that devil-monk,
Hopkins, that made this mischief.'
Second Gent. 'That was he
That fed him with his prophecies?'
First Gent. 'The same.'

Here is obvious reference to the brutal vehemence of Coke, the Attorney-General, to the private examinations of the confederates, whose depositions were taken the day before the trial of Essex and Southampton; to the confession of Sir Christopher Blount, who had been Essex's right-hand man in his fatal affair; to the treachery of Mr. Ashton, Essex's confessor; and a most marked and underlined allusion to Cuffe, the Jesuitical plotter of

treason, the chief instigator and evil tempter of Es the man that 'made this mischief.'

A closer scrutiny would yield further proof, that in scene our Poet was working directly from the life of own time. The lines—

> 'Nor will I sue, altho' the king have mercies,
> More than I dare make faults—'

give utterance to a prominent fact in Essex's case. the allusions to the Irish Deputyship and the 'trick state,' which was 'a deep envious one,' most proba have personal application to Essex, and Mountjoy, possibly to Cecil.

For myself, I feel half ashamed to be decompos Shakspeare's poetry in this way; taking the instrum in pieces to see whence the music came. It looks l filching a light for the purpose of playing the detecti part. And yet, every touch of his personal relati ships, and every authentic footprint are precious me and important to my subject. Also, this identifi tion unites with the other internal evidence in proof t 'King Henry VIII.' was written during the life Elizabeth. The fate of Essex must have profoun affected Shakspeare, and I feel that it was yet fresh his memory when he wrote the 'Prologue,' with iteration of the *truth* of the scenes represented. The p was composed quite in time to be that 'Enterlude King Henry VIII.' which was entered in the Station Books under date Feb. 12th, 1604-5; but not perform I think, until after the accession of James. The allusi to him and the glories of his reign, I hold to be an aft thought, interpolated to meet the players' exigency. I surely not by Shakspeare? How could his drama instinct have tolerated the proclamation of James Elizabeth's heir in a Prophecy?

THE MAN SHAKSPEARE:

A

RE-TOUCHED PORTRAIT.

In retelling an old story, my plea is that I adduce fresh evidence; novel facts; and bring new witnesses into the Court of Criticism. We are now able for the first time to see round the character of Shakspeare in its completeness, without misgivings respecting those back slums of his London life, in which he has been supposed to have got so sadly bemired. We no longer need fear lest he should have cast and fixed a black shadow of himself as his sole personal portrait bequeathed to us. We can look him full in the face in clear honest daylight, untroubled by the moody mists and fantastic shadows, and bat-like suspicions that have so long haunted the twilight uncertainty, to learn at last that our man of men who seemed something more than human in his wisdom of life was not miserably unwise in his own life; did not wantonly profane the beauty of his work, nor wilfully flaw and stain one of our loftiest statues of humanity. Once for all we are now able to silence those who fancied that they had gotten on the blind side of the great seer, and, at least, caught the god 'kissing carrion,' whilst on his visit to our earth.

Three hundred years have passed by since the little

child opened its eyes on the low ceiling and bare wall
the poor birth-place at Stratford-on-Avon, to grow
into that immortal god-send of a man whom we
William Shakspeare. In all this long procession of ye
we meet with no other such face looking out on
the eyes rainy or sunny with the tears and laughter
all time! No other such genius has come to tra
figure English literature. All this while the world
been getting hints of what the man Shakspeare w
and how infinitely wonderful and precious was
work he did; how richly ennobling to us was
legacy of his name! Innumerable writers have thro
what light they could upon his page to help
world on its way; but, as Coleridge says, no comp
hension has yet been able to draw the line of circu
scription round this mighty mind so as to say to its
'I have seen the whole.' And, how few of
who read his works, or continually repeat his nai
have any adequate or even shapeable conception of
man! He who, of all poets, comes nearest home to
with his myriad touches of nature, is the most rem
in his own personality. We only reach him figurativ
at best. We think of him as the chief star of
Elizabethan group, large and luminous above the re
but we do not get at the man in that way, however
may stand on tiptoe with longing, having no glass
draw the planet Shakspeare sufficiently close to us,
that we might make out the human features amid
dazzle of his glory, and see his 'visage in his mind.'
know that somewhere at the centre sits the spirit of
this brightness, however veiled in light. Throbs of i
mortal life, pulses of pleasure and pain, first made
light with their motion, and still shoot forth every spar
of splendour—every evanescence of lovely colour—ev
gleam of grace. Shakspeare's own life—Shakspeare h
self—is at the heart of it all! Although a miracle

man, and, as a creative artist, just the nearest to an earthly representative of that Creator who is everywhere felt in His works, nowhere visible; yet he was a man, and one of the most intensely human that ever walked our world. And it is my present purpose to try briefly to get at the man himself, and make out his features so far as our means will allow, by extracting what spirit of Shakspeare we can from his works, taking advantage of the fresh facts to be derived from this reading of the sonnets, and clothing that spirit as best we may: a grain of human colour, a touch of real life being of more value for my purpose than all the husks of Antiquarianism.

That Spanish Emperor who fancied he could have improved the plan of creation if he had been consulted, would hardly have managed to better the time, and place, and circumstances of Shakspeare's birth. The world could not have been more ripe, or England more ready—the stage of the national life more nobly peopled—the scenes more fittingly draped—than they were for his reception. It was a time when souls were made in earnest, and life grew quick within and large without. The full-statured spirit of the nation had just found its sea-legs and was clothing itself with wings. Shakspeare's starting-place for his victorious career was the fine vantage ground which England had won when she had broken the strength of the Spaniard, burst the girdle they had sought to put round her, and sat enthroned higher than ever in her sea-sovereignty—breathing an ampler air of liberty, strong in the sense of a lustier life, and glad in the great dawn of a future new and limitless.

Into a mixed, multiform, many-coloured world was William Shakspeare born, three hundred years ago. Old times and an old faith had been passing away, like the leaves of autumn wearing their richest colours, and every rent of old ruin was the rift of a new life. England was picturesque to look on in her changing tints, as is

the woodland at the turn of the year, when winter still lingers in the bare dark boughs above, and the young spring comes up in a burst of song and a mist of tender green below. In the year of our Poet's birth we learn that the sum of two shillings was paid by the Corporation of Stratford for defacing an image of the ancient faith in the chapel. The fires of Smithfield had but recently smouldered down, leaving a smoke in the souls of Englishmen that should yet burst into a flame of noble spiritual life, and fierce in their minds was the memory of 'Bloody Mary.' The stage of political life was crowded with magnificent men and women, heroes and poets, statesmen and sea-kings; men who, like Drake, won their victories with such a dash, and others who, like Sidney, won their glory with such a grace. A rare group it was that gathered round Elizabeth and spread their sumptuous braveries in her presence, as in the very sun of pageantry. The citizens of London were yet accustomed to go forth on a May-morning to gather hawthorn-bloom in the village of Charing, and the primroses grew where the Nelson Monument is planted, if not growing, now. Coaches were apt to break down or stick in the deep ruts of rural Drury Lane. In country places like Stratford the old times lingered and the old customs clung. The Cucking-stool was still used as a warning to wives of a termagant tongue. Apprentices and servants who stayed out of their masters' houses after nine o'clock at night were liable to be fined twenty shillings, and have three nights and three days in the open stocks. Brewers were legally compelled to brew a good and wholesome 'small drink' for a halfpenny a gallon; but no one was allowed to be a 'Typlar' unless appointed by the king's justices. Troops of strolling players had now taken the place of the wandering friars of old, and won a warmer welcome up and down the country-side. And in the midst of this time of change, of stirring life, of hopeful

things, when the eager national spirit stood on the very threshold of expectation, our Shakspeare was born, literally in the heart of England.

Nearness to Nature we may look on as the great desideratum for the nurture of a national poet, and this was secured to Shakspeare. He came of good healthy yeoman blood, he belonged to a race that has always been heartily national, and clung to their bit of soil from generation to generation—ploughed a good deal of their life into it, and fought for it, too, in the day of their country's need. No doubt Nature stores up much health and freshness of feeling, love of green things, and songs of birds and quiet appreciation of all out-of-door sights and sounds in men like these—carefully hoarding it until one day it all finds expression, and the long and slowly-gathered result breaks into immortal flower, when, in the fulness of time, the Burns or Shakspeare is born.

We know but little of the childhood of our greatest Englishman. Curiously enough, whilst seeking for the facts of his early life, we find it recorded, as if in smiling mockery of our endeavours, that in the year 1558 the father of Shakspeare was fined fourpence for not keeping his gutters clean. We learn that in the year 1552 he was certainly doing business as a glover, and in 1556 he brought an action against Henry Field for unjustly detaining eighteen quarters of barley, which looks as though he were then a maltster or farmer. In 1565 he was chosen an alderman; in 1569 he was high-bailiff; and in 1571-2 chief alderman. In 1579 he is styled a yeoman. He was in pretty good circumstances when the Poet was born, having a small landed estate near Stratford and some property in the town. It appears as though he met with a great and sudden reverse of fortune about the year 1578, whereby he became no longer worshipful; what or how we are unable to conjecture. In 1587 we find him in prison for debt, and in 1592 his

name is in a list of persons who are supposed to stay away from church through fear of a process of debt.

It is pleasant to know that Shakspeare could have his fair share of a mother's tenderness, and was not compelled too early to fall into the ranks by his father's side and fight the grim battle against poverty, with childhood's small hands and weary feet.

When the boy Shakspeare was five years of age, his father, as high-bailiff, entertained the players. This is the earliest notice we have of theatrical performances in the town. And in all likelihood the child caught his first glimpse in the Stratford Guildhall of that fairy realm in which he was to become the mightiest magician that ever waved the enchanter's wand, and, as the trumpet sounded for the third time and the dramatic vision was unveiled, we may imagine how the yearnings of a new life stirred within him, and he would be dreamingly drawn toward those rare creatures that seemed to have no touch of common earthiness as they walked so radiant in such a world of wonder. It would be an event, indeed—that first sight of the Players!

In the summer of 1575, when Shakspeare was eleven years of age, there were brave doings and princely pageants at Kenilworth, where the Earl of Leicester gave royal entertainment to Queen Elizabeth. The superb affair was continued eighteen days. That Shakspeare was there is beyond any reasonable doubt, and a vision of its 'princely pleasures' and pyrotechnic displays rises on his memory in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream.' This we know is his way of telling us many facts of his own life!

When our Poet was sixteen years of age there was a William Shakspeare drowned in the Avon, near Stratford. How impossible to sum the difference to the world, to human thought, had it been *our* William Shakspeare!

He was in all likelihood educated at the Free-school so long as the father could spare him from work. Possibly

he may have become what we should now call a pupil-teacher, and this have given rise to the tradition that Shakspeare was once a country schoolmaster. We cannot infer what he was from what he knew, for he seems to have known everything. But we do not doubt that he helped his father in his business, and that sorry mixture probably included looking after sheep on the bit of land they possessed or hired, killing the sheep and selling the meat, dealing in the wool that grew on the sheep and in the gloves made from the wool. Labour was not so minutely divided in those days as it now is, besides which, we know how men in the circumstances of Shakspeare's father will try to live by a multiplicity of means in a small way, and grasp at any chance of staying the down-hill tendency.

One feels that there is a considerable basis of truth in the traditions which have reached us, telling that the young Shakspeare was somewhat wild, and joined with other young fellows and let his spirits overflow at times in their boisterous country way. Hence we hear of the drinking bouts and poaching freaks. We may depend on it there was nothing prim and priggish about Willie Shakspeare; for 'Willie' he would be to his youthful companions as well as to his 'play-fellows' of later days! He must have been a fine youth. And if he had anything like the *physique* that glows through the 'Venus and Adonis' there must also have been wild leaps of ebulliant blood, difficult to repress, and the youth, with all his powers at play, in the lustihood of animal spirits—the senses hungry with an out-of-door zest, and few refining influences at work about him, may have broken out of bounds. If the sedate Goethe with his stately reserves of ripened age had his unrestful youth and frolic devilries, Shakspeare may surely be accredited with his extravagances and runnings riot, before the buoyant air-bubbling nature was calmed and crystallized into its noble man-

hood. Not that there was any great harm in his frolics, only they may have been too expensive for the father's position. He may not have been able to afford what the youth was spending with a lavish hand. Possibly he kept the worst as long as he could from his son's knowledge. Suddenly there came a change. The young man looked on life with more serious eyes. He would see his father, as it were, coming down the hill, beaten and broken-spirited, as he was mounting full of hope and exulting vigour. He would have sad thoughts, such as gradually steadied the wild spirits within him, and make resolves that we know he fulfilled as soon as possible in after-life. Gentle Willie would not be without self-reproach if he was in the least a cause of his father's declining fortunes. This thought we may surmise was one of the strongest incentives to that prudence which became proverbial in after-years, and one of the quickest feelings working within him, as he strove so strenuously to make his father a gentleman, was that he had once helped to make him poor. It may be a worthless fancy, but I cannot help thinking that our Poet's great thrift and his undoubted *grip* in money matters had such an unselfish awakenment.

Another fixed belief of mine is that the youth and the 'fickle maid' of the 'Lover's Complaint' are none other than William Shakspeare and Anne Hathaway. In this poem the Poet is, I think, making fun of their own early troubles. There is a pleasant exaggeration throughout both in his description of her, and her description of him. The humour is very *pawky*. Some people, he suggests, might have thought her old in her ancient large straw-bonnet, or hat. But he assures us, Time had not cut down all that youth began, nor had youth quite left her; some of her beauty yet peeped through the lattice of age! The lady is anxious for us to think that she is old in sorrow, not in years. The description of him is pointed by the author with the most provoking slyness, and used

in her defence for the loss of her 'white stole.'[1] I entertain not the slightest doubt that we have here the most life-like portrait of Shakspeare extant, drawn by himself under the freest, happiest condition for ensuring a true likeness — that is, whilst humourously pretending to look at himself through the eyes of Anne Hathaway, under circumstances the most sentimental. A more perfect or beautiful portrait was never finished. The frolic life looks out of the eyes, the red is ripe on the cheek, the maiden manhood soft on the chin, the breath moist on the lip that has the glow of the garnet, the bonny smile that 'gilded his deceit' so bewitchingly. He is—

'One by nature's outwards so commended,
That maiden eyes stuck over all his face;
Love lacked a dwelling and made him her place,
And when in his fair parts she did abide,
She was new-lodged and newly Deified.

'His browny locks did hang in crooked curls,
And every light occasion of the wind
Upon his lips their silken parcel hurls;
Each eye that saw him did enchant the mind,
For on his visage was in little drawn,
What largeness thinks in Paradise was sawn.

'Small show of man was yet upon his chin;
His phœnix-down began but to appear,
Like unshorn velvet, on that termless skin,
Whose bare out-bragged the web it seemed to wear,
Yet showed his visage by that cost more dear;
And nice affection wavering, stood in doubt,
If best were as it was, or best without.'

The very hair, in shape and hue, that Shakspeare must have had when young, to judge by the bust and the description of it as left, coloured from life! The inner man,

[1] There is the subtle Shakspearian smile at human nature's frailties in the suggestion of stanza 23, that in like circumstances we seldom let the *by-past perils of others* stand in *our* future way.

too, was beauteous as the outer: gentle until moved, and then his spirit was a storm personifie only such a storm

> 'As oft twixt May and April is to see,
> When *winds breathe sweet, unruly though they b*

He was universally beloved, and then, what a v tongue he had!—

> 'So on the tip of his subduing tongue,
> All kinds of arguments and questions deep,
> All replication prompt and reason strong,
> For his advantage still did wake and sleep,
> To make the weeper laugh, the laugher weep.'

And he was such an actor too!—

> 'He had the dialect and different skill,
> Catching all passions in his craft at will;
> In him a plenitude of subtle matter,
> Applied to Cautills, all strange forms receives,
> Of burning blushes, or of weeping water,
> Or swooning paleness; and he takes and leaves,
> In either's aptness, as it best deceives,
> To blush at speeches rank, to weep at woes,
> Or to turn white and swoon at tragic shows.'

And to think

> 'What a hell of witchcraft lay
> In the small orb of one particular tear'

when wept by him! Poor Anne! No marvel that

> 'My woeful self—
> What with his *Art* in Youth, and *Youth* in art—
> Threw my affections in his charméd power;
> Reserved the stalk, and gave him all the flower.'[1]

We learn by the 16th stanza that he was also a c

[1] Thus prettily anticipating an illustration in Burns' 'Bonny Do

rider; much admired when he followed the hounds across country with a daring dash, or came cantering over to Shottery with a lover's sideling grace.

Who can doubt that this is 'Will. Shakspeare,' the handsome young fellow of splendid capacity, so shaped and graced by nature as to play the very devil with the hearts of the Warwickshire lasses? The poem is founded on a circumstance that preceded the marriage of the Poet and Anne Hathaway; the 'lover' being one who hath wept away a jewel in her tears, and who is described as older than her sweetheart. His own gifts and graces are purposely made the most of in humouring the necessities of poor Anne's case—the helplessness of his own. These things which she points to in extenuation also serve him for excuse, as if he said, 'being so handsome and so clever, how can I help being so beloved and run after? You see, it is not my fault!' This smiling mood has given free play to his pencil, and the poem brings us nearer to the radiant personal humour of the man, I believe, than all his plays, especially that story of the Nun—

His 'parts had power to charm a sacred Nun'—

a lady whose beauty made the young nobles of the Court dote on her, who was wooed by the loftiest in the land but kept them all at distance, and retired into a nunnery, to 'spend her living in eternal love.' Yet, pardon him for telling it; he confesses the fact with an *im*-'pudency so rosy!' No sooner had she set eyes on him, by accident, than she too fell in love. In a moment had 'religious love put out religion's eye.' I think this a glorious outbreak of his spirit of fun!

If I am right then in my conjecture that 'gentle Willie' was the beguiling lover of this forlorn lady of the 'Complaint,' we shall find a remark of his to the point on which I have touched. In reply to some of the charges brought against him, he says,

'All my offences that abroad you see,
Are *errors of the blood; none of the mind.*'

When he wanted four months of nineteen years of age, Shakspeare was married to Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a yeoman, at Shottery. We read that Eve was formed from one of Adam's ribs, taken from him during a deep sleep. And it has been suspected that our gentle Willie's Eve was formed for him by the hand of Love during a deep sleep of the soul; that he threw the hues of his young imagination round her, and got married before he well knew where he was. There is not much however to give countenance or colour to the theory, which has sprung from reading the sonnets as true to the Poet's own personal experience. Certainly she was getting on for eight years older than himself, and he has in his works left a warning to others against their doing as he did.[1] But

[1] At least so say the Critics. Though it would be difficult to find any sign of Shakspeare's own personality in the words. Mr. Grant White, in his recent work, cannot forgive Anne Hathaway for marrying Shakspeare. He thinks the second-best bed too good for her, and if he could have had his will, she would never have had her's. He contends that if Shakspeare had loved and honoured his wife, he would not have written those passages, which must have been '*gall and wormwood to his soul.*' That is good argument then that he did love her, and that they were not quite so bitter to him. Surely it is the more mean and unmanly to suppose that he wrote them because *he did not* love and honour his wife! It is sad indeed to learn that Anne Hathaway brought the Poet to such 'sorrow and shame,' as Mr. White says is frequently expressed in the plays *and the sonnets.* This Critic takes the matter of Anne's age so much to heart, that one would be glad to suggest any source of consolation. Possibly Mrs. William Shakspeare may have been one of those fine healthy Englishwomen—I have a sovereign sample in my mind's eye now—in whose presence we never think of age or reckon years; whose tender spring is followed by a long and glorious summer, an autumn fruitful and golden. These do not attain their perfection in April; they ripen longer and hoard up a maturer fragrance for the fall o' the year, a mellower sweetness for the winter, and about mid-season they often pause, wearing the bud, flower, and fruit of human beauty all at once. Time does not tell on these as we are told he does on the American sisterhood. Anne outlived her husband many years, and tradition says she earnestly desired to be laid in the same grave with him, but that no one, for fear of the curse on it, dared touch the gravestone. Mr. White should have seen in this the object for which the lines were written!

there is no reason to suppose that he ran away from home because he did not like his wife.

Another supposition obtains—that he was compelled to quit Stratford on account of his propensity for deer-stealing. I do not in the least doubt his liking for venison, still the poor fellow did not need Sir Thomas Lucy's deer to drive him forth into the world in search of a living. We must remember that his wife had very recently presented him with twin children, and at this hint of his better half, he may have thought it quite time to look out for better quarters. The increasing poverty of his father would be another incentive to his leaving the old place. This must have many a time made him look wistfully up that London road at the top of Henley street, and long for the great city, which loomed far in the distance, and rose up so golden through the mist that would be filling his eyes.

In all probability our Poet went to London to be a player. He must have been a born actor; a dramatist, in that shape, before he became one in writing. This was the constitution of his nature; the very mould of his mind. The strongest proof to me that the 'Lover's Lament' is personal to Shakspeare, is the description of his exquisite art and abundant subtlety as an actor. His tendency and inclination, if not his capability as such, must have been known to some of his fellow townsmen, and he would easily secure a good introduction to the theatre. That he served an apprenticeship to the law I do not believe. To say that he has a wider acquaintance with law—uses legal forms and phrases more freely and unerringly than any other poet, is only to say that we are speaking of Shakspeare in one of the many departments of knowledge where, as a poet, he is unparalleled; he is not a whit more wonderful in this than in so many other things. I think he obtained his insight through a personal connexion with some live spirit of a friend, who could throw a

light into the dark intricacies and cobwebbed corners of the law, rather than from any dead drudgery in an attorney's office. Nor have we far to seek for such a possible friend. There was Greene, the attorney, a Stratford man, and a cousin of the Poet, whose brain and books may have been at his service, and Shakspeare was the man who could make more use of other men's knowledge than they could themselves. The worst of it for the theory of his having been an attorney's clerk is that it will not account for his insight into Law. His knowledge is not office-sweepings, but ripe fruits, mature as though he had spent his life in their growth. The law stood high in Elizabeth's estimation, and the Poet had his own private interest in mastering its details so far as was possible.

After he entered the Blackfriars Theatre, we lose sight of him altogether for some years. These years, doubtless, include the hardest part of our Poet's struggle for fame and fortune, which was at that time really a struggle for his living. Our 'gentle' Shakspeare had his sufferings, and it may be especially at this time. Not that I imagine personal suffering to have been his incentive to song. He was not one of the subjective brood, who find their inspiration in such a source. Largeness of sympathy with others, rather than intensity of sympathy with self, was Shakspeare's poetic motive. His soul was not a self-reflecting one, but a large mirror, that gave back images of other lives; absence of self being an essential, and calmness a necessary condition of clearness. This capacious mirror of his mind, and his sublimest mood, are best indicated by his own words, in the poem of 'Lucrece,' where, he speaks of the '*bottomless* conceit that comprehends in *still* imagination.' It is from a false view of the sonnets that it has been supposed he lived his tragedies before he wrote them. It is in natures of the Byronic kind that the amount of force heaving below, images itself permanently above in a mountain of visible

personality. Shakspeare's truer image would be the ocean that can mould mountains into shape, yet keep its own level; and grow clear and calm as ever, with all heaven smiling in its depths, after the wildest storm, the most heart-breaking Tragedy.

His was not one of your 'suffering souls.' These are wrung and pinched, gnarled and knotted into a more emphatic form of personality than he wears for us. He could keep a calm 'sough;' convert his surplus steam into force; consume his own smoke, and make his devil draw for him. He gathered all the sunshine he could and ripened on it, and his spirit enlarged and mellowed in content.

This, however, we may safely infer; his circumstances were not very flourishing at first, or we should hardly hear of his father being in prison for debt, where we find him in 1587, when Shakspeare has been in London two years. His strong sense of family pride would have prevented such a thing if possible. We hear of him again in 1589, when he has been four years in London, and, if apocryphally, it must be near the mark.

Mr. Browning tells us there are two points in the adventure of the diver—

> 'One—when, a Beggar, he prepares to plunge!
> One—when, a Prince, he rises with his pearl!'

Our Poet had now made his plunge, and emerged into daylight once more. If we could have asked him what he had grasped in the gloom, he might probably have told us a handful of mud, having experienced the worst of his theatrical life. He had become a player and a part proprietor of the Blackfriars Theatre. But he had also found his pearl. They had set him to vamp up old plays, put flesh on skeletons, and adapt new ones; and he had discovered that he also could make as well as mend. During this time he had been working, invisible to us, at the foundations of his future fame; like the

trees and plants, he had been clutching his rootage in the night time.

Here again let me remark on the influence which a personal theory of the sonnets has unconsciously had in making the commentators ignore the extreme probability that, as soon as he was able, our Poet would naturally have his wife and family to live with him in London. It has been discovered that he paid rates, and why on earth should he not have received his wife and children at his home near the Bear-garden, in Southwark, or St. Helen's, Bishopsgate? He was by nature a family man; true to our most English instincts; his heart must have had its sweet domesticities of home-feeling nestling very deep in it—our love of privacy and our enjoyment of that 'safe, sweet corner of the household fire, behind the heads of children.' The letter attributed to Southampton records that he was a married man, of good repute as such, and implies that the wife and family lived with him in London. The true reading of Betterton's story told through Rowe, is that Shakspeare left his wife and family *temporarily*, and, as he could not have returned to them after the short time of parting to live at Stratford, they, of course, rejoined him in London. Besides which, the mention of his going to Stratford once a year suggests that his home was in London, and this was a holiday visit. And, if the wife is to be thrust aside, on account of her age, can we imagine that Shakspeare's home would be in London, and his daughter Susannah and his boy Hamnet, in whom lay his cherished hope of succession, at Stratford? Again, if he had left Anne Hathaway in dislike, why should he have been in such apparent haste to go back to live with his rustic wife, and buy for her the best house—the Great House—in Stratford? We may rest satisfied that Shakspeare did just the most natural thing—which was to have a home of his own, with his wife and family in it: that he dwelt, as Wisdom dwells, with children round his

knees. And in this privacy he was hidden, when others of his contemporaries were visible about town; here it was that so much of his work was done; here 'his silence would sit brooding;' so many of his days were passed unnoticed, and he could live the quiet happy life that leaves the least record.

We should have still fewer facts of Shakspeare's life than we have, were it not for his evident ambition to make money, and become a man of property. Whatsoever feeling for fame and immortality he may have had, he assuredly possessed a great sense of mortal needs. He never forgot those little mouths waiting to be fed by his hand; and we may believe him to have been as frugal in his life as he was indefatigable in his work. He had seen enough of the ills and felt enough of the stings of poverty in his father's home. So he sets about gaining what money he can by unwearied diligence in working, and grasps it firmly when he has it.

As a proof of his prosperity it may be noted that his father had applied to the Heralds' College, in 1596, for a grant of coat-armour; and, in 1597, a suit in Chancery was commenced on the part of John and Mary Shakspeare, for the recovery of an estate which had been mortgaged by them. In the year 1597 he is able to buy the best house in Stratford, called New Place. In the next year he sells a load of stone to the Corporation for 10d. From this little fact we may infer that alterations were going on at New Place. He had worked hard for some years, and made a nest, and was, as we say, 'feathering' it ready for the time when he could quit the stage, and retire to Stratford. He is also doing a stroke of business as a maltster, or, rather, is not this the likeliest reading of facts? In the year 1598 he was assessed on property in St. Helen's, Bishopsgate. Two years later his name has dropped out of the list. Now, as New Place was bought and made ready by that time, the

most probable conjecture is that his wife and family left the house in London and went back to Stratford to live in their new home. And, instead of the ten quarters of corn then at New Place implying that he was trading as a maltster, it may have been that Shakspeare had provisioned the little garrison, in the matter of baking and brewing, against famine; for there was a great dearth of corn in the land at the time, and such a careful forethought would be exceedingly like him? His circumstances had so far improved that he could now look forward to longer visits to Stratford, and, as he wrote more he would undoubtedly begin to play less. London may not have agreed with his children. Had not his boy Hamnet died in 1596?

He not only makes money, but he invests it, and turns it over. The fame of his wealth soon spreads, and he is looked up to in the Golden City. Some of his country friends want him to buy, and he does buy; others want him to lend, and he is able to lend. He lends to Richard Quiney, the father of his future son-in-law, the sum of 30*l.* We are not sure that he did not take interest for it. The transaction has a smack of percentage about it. Of this we may be sure, that if Shakspeare did not take interest *for* his money, he took a most lively interest *in* it. In May, 1602, his brother Gilbert completed for him the purchase of 107 acres of arable land, from William and John Comb. In September of the same year, he bought other property in his native town. In 1604 he brought an action against Philip Rogers, in the Court of Record, at Stratford, to recover a debt of 1*l.* 15*s.* 10*d.* In July, 1605, he makes his largest investment. He purchases for the sum of 440*l.* more than 2000*l.* of our money—half of the lease of tithes, to be collected in Stratford and other places, which has some thirty-one years to run.

He is now trying to leave the stage as player and manager, and live at Stratford, where he can look after his tithes, which we find he does pretty sharply. He

has acquired houses and lands, and obtained a grant of arms, and shown every desire to found a county family; to possess a bit of this dear England in which he could plant the family tree, and go down to posterity *that* way. He appears to have been truly thoughtless and careless of fame, and to have flung off his works to find their own way as best they could to immortality. Publishers might print or misprint his poems, and he seems to have taken no public notice of it. It is possible that he had some large and lazy idea of one day collecting and correcting an edition for the press. If so, it passed into that Coleridgian Limbo of unfulfilled intentions where so many others have gone, or else death overtook him all too swiftly. It is quite as possible that he may have thought Puritanism was about to sweep the land clear of plays and play-goers. But that he was ambitious of founding a local family house, which should have such foundations in the soil of England as he could broaden out with his own toil, is one of the most palpable facts of his life, enforced again and again, a fact most absolutely opposed to the fancy that he lived apart from his wife—and it brings the man home to us with his own private tastes and national feelings, plainly as though he had lived but the other day, as Walter Scott.

We now turn to his life in London and what is said of him there. His first rising is sun-like, with the mists about him—the mists of malice and envy. The earlier writers for the stage are jealous and disgusted that a mere player, a *factotum* for the theatre, should enter the arena with 'college pens' and classical scholars. But for these mists, the breath of slander, and for the visible blinking of the little lights at the glory of great sunrise, we should not know when or where the new orb was first visible on the horizon. Our Poet, however, takes little notice of them, but ascends serenely on his upward way. Most assuredly he had to fight for his place, and struggle

arduously at starting to win it. This child of Nature would be looked upon as a bastard by the learned, with no Greek or Roman godfather to stand sponsor for him. He tried his best at times, as we may see, to be classical, and stuck into his work all the mythologic allusions and Latin words he could get together; at which his enemies laughed and made fun—thus forcing him more and more to that reliance on Nature which was to raise him so high above all his artificial, euphuistic, over-classical contemporaries. They might laugh, without—Nature was too strong within him. He, too, had dallied with the old Greek lyre in a dilettante fashion in his poems—the only poetry of his almost that his contemporaries praise. But he was now fast growing into the human personification of that legendary Israfel whose lyre was his own heart-strings, not a pretty instrument to be held in the hand. Moreover, the audience at the Blackfriars was unsophisticated enough to prefer Shakspeare's more natural drama to the learning and classicism of others, which was annoying, indeed, to all second-hand poets.[1] This strife betwixt the natural and what was thought the true art runs through all we hear of Shakspeare. There was many a gird at him and his want of learning, and his wit as not being college-bred. Bacon we know thought Latin the only language for immortality. Luckily Shakspeare found English sufficient. This strife would be bitter at first. It mellowed afterwards into the humour of the 'wit-combats,' but it reappears all through. We get a hint of it from Shakspeare himself in sonnet 78:

> 'But thou art all my Art, and dost advance
> As high as Learning, my rude ignorance.'

We doubt not that our Poet in his quiet way gave his opponents as good as they sent. We know how he

[1] 'Few of the University pen plays well. Why, here's our fellow Shakspeare puts them all down.' *The Return from Parnassus.*

mimicked and mocked their affectations. We should prefer to think the anecdote true that tells of one of Shakspeare's replies to Jonson, it looks so representative. It is said our Poet was godfather to one of Ben's children. After the christening Ben found him in a deep study, and asked him what he was thinking about. He replied that he had been considering what would be the most fitting gift for him to bestow on his god-child, and he had resolved at last. 'I prythee what?' says the father. 'I'faith, Ben,' (fancy the rare smile of our gentle Willie!) 'I'll e'en give him a dowzen good *Lattin* spoones, and *thou shalt translate them.*'

I do not share the belief that Spenser's well-known description in his 'Teares of the Muses' was meant for Shakspeare. Here the representation is so according to our present view of the Poet that it has been caught at and identified. But we may safely say that no man living in 1590 (the year in which the poem was really printed, possibly for the second time,) ever saw Shakspeare as the 'man whom Nature's self had made to mock herself, and truth to imitate.' Todd's conjecture that Philip Sidney was the 'Willy'[1] meant is borne out by the whole of the facts, internal and external. Todd supposes the poem with all likelihood to have been written in 1580; and in 1580 we find Sidney had retired into the country disgusted with the court. It is the man, much more than the author, that Spenser celebrates. But he evidently alludes to the 'Arcadia' in the 'kindly counter under *mimic shade.*' He also refers to the distaste of Sidney for printing what he had written, when he speaks of those who 'dare their follies forth *so rashlie* throwe.' His 'choosing to sit in idle cell' most probably refers to Sidney's retirement, which lasted for some years, during which time he would neither take public employment nor publish what he had written. We need not scruple to

[1] 'Willy' was a general name for a Shepherd, *i. e.* Poet.

say that Shakspeare's art could not at that time have been thus recognised. Sidney's 'Arcadia' and 'Masques' furnished the kind of art that Spenser meant; such art as has a lurking consciousness of doing its work a little better than nature could. The person aimed at is likewise one of the '*learned*,' whereas Shakspeare was not. If Sidney be not the writer alluded to, I am perfectly satisfied that it could not have been Shakspeare.

The lines in 'Colin Clout's come home again,' supposed to point out our Poet, are in every way more likely—

> 'And there, though last not least, is Ætion;
> A gentler Shepherd may no-where be found;
> Whose Muse, full of high thoughts' invention,
> Doth, like himself, heroically sound.'

These suit the Poet's name, his nature and his histories.

If this be Shakspeare so modestly placed by Spenser it could hardly have been the same Poet as he who was so enthusiastically besung by him years before!

It was two years later that Greene gave expression to his splenetic attack upon the new and rising Dramatist, and spoke of him as the upstart crow of a Player who was beginning to dress in the feathers of braver birds, and supposed that he could 'bombast out a blank verse' with the best of them.[1] There is personal character in Greene's description. He calls the Poet 'an *Absolute Johannes Fac-totum*,' or Jack-of-all-trades for his Theatre, who could turn his hand to whatsoever work had to be done and do it with all his might. It gives us a lusty sense of Shakspeare's activity, and shows that he had to play many parts. The 'Tiger's heart' is also significant. As though the fellow had apprehended dimly the coming earthquake

[1] In spite of Nash's disclaimer, and Chettle's testimony as to the handwriting of Greene, there is some ground for suspicion that Nash had to do with the 'Groat's-worth of wit.' In his epistle prefixed to Greene's '*Menaphon*,' this writer speaks of those '*who think to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of bragging blank verse.*'

of the great '*Shake-scene*' and caught a glimpse of the couchant strength and stealthy might of the man Shakspeare, and turned his own inward fears into outward bravado of abuse, just as the savage will taunt the imprisoned or wounded king of beasts when he himself is out of harm's way.

In September of the same year Gabriel Harvey took up the cudgels on behalf of himself and others who had been attacked and outrageously abused by the Greene 'set,' and replied to 'Woeful Greene and beggarly Pierce Penniless, as it were a Grasshopper and a Cricket, two pretty Musicians but silly creatures; the Grasshopper imaged would be nothing less than a Green Dragon, and the Cricket malcontented the only Unicorn of the Muses.' The letters are '*especially touching parties abused by Robert Greene—incidentally of divers excellent persons, and some matters of note.*' In the third of these we have what I believe to be the most appreciative of all contemporary notices of Shakspeare: the only intimation that anyone then living had caught the splendid sparkle of the jewel that was yet to 'lighten all the isle.' It is surprising to me that no more attention should have been attracted to this very obvious recognition of the rising genius of Shakspeare. Harvey is partly pleading, partly expostulating with Nash. I speak, he says, to a Poet, but 'good sweet orator, BE a *divine Poet* indeed.' He urges him to employ his golden talent to honour virtue and valour with 'heroical cantos,' as 'noble Sir Philip Sidney and gentle Maister Spenser have done, with immortal fame.' He is pleading for more nature in poetry. 'Right Artificiality,' he urges, 'is not mad-brained, or ridiculous, or absurd, or blasphemous, or monstrous; but deep-conceited, but pleasurable, but delicate, but exquisite, but gracious, but admirable.' He points out what he considers the finest models, the truest poetry of the past, and, turning to the Elizabethan time, he names some dear lovers of the Muses whom he admires

and cordially recommends, making mention of Spenser, Watson, Daniel, Nash and others. These he thanks affectionately for their studious endeavours to polish and enrich their native tongue. He tells the poets of the day that he appreciates their elegant fancy, their excellent wit, their classical learning, their efforts to snatch a grace from the antique, but he has discovered the bird of a new dawn, with a burst of music fresh from the heart of Nature, and its prelusive warblings have made his spirits dance within him; his words mount upon a rapture, as he 'rises on the toe.' He will not call this new Poet by name, because, were he to say what he feels, he should be suspected of exaggeration, over-praise, or unworthy motive. But he says it is the '*sweetest and divinest Muse that ever sang in English or other language!*'

Now this cannot be either Spenser or Sidney; these he has named. It cannot be Drayton, for it is a new man, and this is a plea for a new Poet, one of those whom Greene has abused. The writer is bespeaking the attention of Poets and Critics, more especially of Thomas Nash, to the writings of this new Poet, and he pleads with those who flatter themselves on being learned not to sneer at or neglect this '*fine handiwork of Nature and excellenter Art combined.* Gentle minds and flourishing wits were infinitely to blame if they should not also, for curious imitation, propose unto themselves *such fair types of refined and engraced eloquence.* The right novice of pregnant and aspiring conceit will not outskip any precious gem of invention, or any beautiful flower of elocution that may richly adorn or gallantly bedeck the trim garland of his budding style. I speak generally to every springing wit; but more especially to a few, and at this instant singularly to one, whom I salute with a hundred blessings, and *entreat, with as many prayers, to love them that love all good wits, and hate none, but the Devil and his incarnate imps notoriously professed.*' This was published by

Gabriel Harvey late in the year 1592, in answer to the attacks of Nash and Greene. Every particular points to Shakspeare as the Poet meant. Marlowe certainly is not named in the list of poets mentioned, though he may be hinted at as one of those 'notoriously professed.' He, however, was one that had been to college. This is a plea on behalf of some one who has not, but who has been attacked by the classic pen of 'young Juvenal' Nash. It is a reply to the petulance and bitterness of Greene, and his friend, the 'byting satyrist.' It is addressed TO Thomas Nash who, it must be remembered, was Shakspeare's 'old sweet enemy;' about the earliest to sneer at the player who was gradually becoming a Poet, in his 'Anatomie of Absurditie' printed in 1590, two years before he was pelted with the wild and stupid abuse of the 'Groat's-worth of Wit'—in which, if Nash had no hand, we have only too true a reflex of his spirit. If Nash and Greene aimed at Shakspeare in their attacks, assuredly it is Shakspeare whom Gabriel Harvey defends. The evidence is conclusive. In effect Harvey replies to Nash, 'You are infinitely to blame in the course you are pursuing with regard to this new writer. Do not, I beseech you, wilfully blind your eyes to so much beauty.' This he does in a gentle conciliatory spirit, not wishing to stir up strife. 'Love them that love all good wits,' he says, 'and *hate none.*'

Thus to Harvey belongs the honour of first proclaiming the sunrise. Others may have perceived the orient colours, but this writer first said it was so, and cried aloud the new dawn in English Poetry—had the intuition necessary for seeing that the nature of Shakspeare's work was incomparably higher than all the Art of the Classical School, and uttered his feeling with a forthright, frank honesty, in a strain so lofty, that it found no echo in that age until Ben Jonson gave the rebound in his noble lines to Shakspeare's memory. But Jonson then stood in the after-glow that

followed the sunset. Harvey penned his eulogy in the light of the early sunrise. He pointed out the first springing beams, and called upon all who were true worshippers of the sacred fire. He alone dared to speak such a lusty panegyric of the new Poet's natural graces, and exalt his art above that of his most learned rivals with their fantastic conceits, their euphuistic follies, and 'Aretinish mountains of huge exaggeration.' He alone called upon those who were decrying Shakspeare so coarsely, to study his works, and try to imitate his style; this he did in words which have the heart-warmth of personal friendship trying to make friends for a friend out of the bitterest enemies:[1] words which were, no doubt, laughed at uproariously.

This early recognition of Shakspeare arises out of the old quarrel of Learning *versus* the natural brain, which appears and reappears in all we hear of Shakspeare's literary life. In this quarrel Nash made the first onset, continued the battle along with the Greene clique, until awed into silence by the majestic rise and dilation of Shakspeare's genius, or forced to lay his hand on his mouth because, as Chettle confessed, 'divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty and his facetious grace in writing, that approves his Art.' And because some influence had been brought to bear on Nash to make him so quickly follow the 'Groat'sworth of Wit' with a Private 'Epistle to the Printer' prefixed to the 2nd edition of his 'Pierce Penniless his Supplication to the Divell' (1592) in which he repudiates having had anything to do

[1] In most of the comments on the Nash and Harvey quarrel, Nash wins all the sympathy, and Harvey all the ridicule. The Professor was a very pompous writer, but Greene was an indefensible blackguard, as bitter after his conversion as before, and Nash was a thorough mud-lark of literature, dearly delighting in the dirt he flung. Harvey certainly did one good thing when he proclaimed that this new genius flashed the authentic fire, and he said one good thing when he called Greene's '*Arcadia*' the *very funeral* of Sidney's! He was probably on such a footing with some of Shakspeare's 'private friends,' as to get a look at the earliest sonnets, and the 'Venus and Adonis,' then in MS.

with Greene's pamphlet, in such furious words as these:—'Other news I am advertised of, that a scald, trivial, lying pamphlet, called "Greene's Groat'sworth of Wit," is given out to be of my doing. God never have care of my soul, but utterly renounce me, if the least word or sillible in it proceeded from my pen, or if I were any way privie to the writing or printing of it.' I have accounted for the change in Nash by supposing him to have found a patron in the Earl of Southampton.

There are signs, I think, that Shakspeare grew sick of hearing so much said about learning by those who showed so little wisdom in their lives. There seems to be a hint of this in the 'Taming of the Shrew': Gremio exclaims,

> 'O this Learning; what a thing it is!'

and Grumio replies,

> 'O this Woodcock; what an ass it is!'

He had the self-mastery that could keep quietly cool in front of the most wrathful fire which his success had kindled in others, but he sometimes smote them with his humour as with a sun-stroke. For instance, in the case of those 'feathers' Greene had charged him with stealing—a charge that was re-echoed in 1594, by the author of 'Greene's Funerals';

> 'Nay more, the men that so eclipsed his fame
> Purloined his plumes! Can they deny the same?'

Shakspeare assuredly makes private reference to these in sonnet 78, and a public one in 'Hamlet.' When the prince grows exultant over the marked success of the speech which he had set down for the players—he remarks to Horatio, 'Would not this Sir, and *a forest of feathers*—if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk, with me—with two Provençal Roses on my razed shoes, get me a

fellowship in a cry of players?' Plainly enough this indicates the way in which Shakspeare took his place in the Blackfriars Company, and also contains a smiling allusion to Greene's charge as to the manner of feathering his nest there.

There is more, however, in Hamlet's words than this making fun of the 'feathers;' something covertly concealed *under the rose* that no one has yet espied. If we look intently we shall see the snake stir beneath the flowers; a subtle snake of irony with the most wicked glitter in its eye!

I do not know the origin of the legend, but reference is frequently made by the Elizabethan dramatists to the devil hiding his cloven hoof under a rose stuck on the shoe. Webster alludes to it in his 'White Devil,'

> 'Why 'tis the Devil!
> I know him *by a great rose* he wears on 's shoe,
> To hide his cloven foot.'

And Ben Jonson has a character 'Fitzdottrel' in 'The Devil is an Ass,' who has long been desirous of meeting with Satan; so long that he begins to think there is no devil at all but what the painters have made. On suddenly seeing 'Pug' he is startled into fearing that his great wish may be at last realised, and he exclaims—

> 'fore hell, my heart was at my mouth,
> Till I had *viewed his shoes* well; for *those Roses*
> Were *big enough to hide* a cloven hoof!'

Hamlet's puzzling remark assuredly glances at this legend of the Devil hiding his cloven hoof under the rose. The poet has a double intention in making such an allusion. On the surface it may be interpreted as pointing to the trick played on the King and Court, by Hamlet's having so cunningly used the players for his purpose in touching upon the matter of the murder—thus hiding the cloven

hoof in the buskin. But it goes deeper, and means more. It is the private laugh about the 'feathers' continued. The poet is still jesting at the consternation and amazement which his presence and his success had created amongst his *learned* rivals and the outcry they made, as though the very devil had broken loose in the theatre, and was hiding his cloven foot in a player's shoe!

This reading will determine two things. First, that 'razed shoes' signifies shoes cut or cloven, corresponding to the cloven hoof. In Jonson's play 'Fitzdottrel' says—

'Your *shoe 's not cloven,* Sir.'

Secondly, the roses intended are Provençal roses, not Provincial. The Rose of Provençe was a splendid large rose, and it is here chosen on account of its size and the shelter it affords the cloven hoof, or (as the Wit renders it) 'razed shoe.' In Webster's drama the devil wears a '*great rose,*' and in Jonson's the rose is '*big enough* to hide a cloven hoof.' So Shakspeare, in his way of using a word that will burst into bloom, and make a picture of his meaning, selects the Provençal Rose.

Again, in this same play he pokes fun at Master Nash! He has taken the identical subject treated by Marlowe and Nash in their 'Dido, Queen of Carthage,' for the purpose of mocking the rant and bombast of these *learned* writers, the speech chosen, most probably, being the work of Nash. '*One speech in it I chiefly loved,*' says Hamlet 'twas Æneas' tale to Dido; and thereabout of it especially, where he speaks of Priam's slaughter.' He then proceeds to outdo the said speech, which in 'Dido' begins—

'At which the frantic Queen leap'd on his face,
And in his eyelids hanging by the nails,
A little while prolonged her husband's life—'

the 'frantic Queen' is turned into the 'mobled Queen,' and

in both speeches poor old Priam is struck down with the wind of Pyrrhus' sword. The burlesque is most patent and complete; the Poet's face is all one radiant broad grin underneath the gravest of tragic masks. The Critics have discovered I know not what concealed artistic purpose in this bit of Shakspeare's natural and irrepressible fun!

Jonson spoke the last word in this quarrel, now grown kindly, when he said that Shakspeare *had* little Latin and less Greek.

In Marston's 'Scourge of Villanie,' satire 11, entitled 'Humours,' there is a description which most unmistakeably points to Shakspeare, and no one else—

> 'Luscus, what's plaid to-day? Faith, *now I know*
> *I set thy lips abroach, from whence doth flow*
> *Naught but pure Juliet and Romeo!*
> Say who acts best? *Drusus* or Roscio?
> *Now I have him, that nere of ought did speak,*
> *But when of Playes or Players he did treat—*
> *Hath made a Commonplace-Book out of Playes,*
> *And speaks in print*: at least what ere he saies
> Is warranted by curtain plaudites,
> If ere you heard him *courting Lesbia's eyes*!
> Say (courteous Sir), *speaks he not movingly,*
> *From out some new pathetique Tragedy?*
> *He writes, he rails, he jests, he courts (what not)?*
> *And all from out his huge, long-scrapéd stock*
> *Of well-penned Plays.*'

Marston has in a previous satire (the 7th), parodied the exclamation of Richard in 'A Man! a Man! a Kingdom for a Man!' And in this he repeats the expressions and parodies the speech of Capulet when calling upon his company for a dance—

> 'A hall! a hall! give room and foot it girls.
> More light ye knaves, &c.'

This Marston mocks thus—

'A hall! a hall!
Room for the spheres, the orbs celestiall
Will dance Kemp's jigge; they'll revel with neat jumps;
A worthy Poet hath put on their pumps.'

This will show how visibly Shakspeare was in the writer's mind. Next 'Roscius' was the name by which Burbage was everywhere known: he was called by that name in his lifetime, and Camden uses it in chronicling the player's death. And then we have Shakspeare coupled with him as 'Drusus,' either after the eloquent Roman Tribune or some character in a play now lost. The two are named together as the chief men of the company that played 'Romeo and Juliet.' So these two, Shakspeare and Burbage, are afterwards named together by John Davies in his 'Microcosmos.' Shakspeare is also identified by the allusion to 'Romeo and Juliet.' This *Luscus* is a worshipper of the new dramatic poet, who speaks so movingly from out each new pathetic tragedy. He talks of little else than Shakspeare, and is infected by the ebulliant passion of this wonderful drama that has taken the town by storm. At the mention of a theatre, Shakspeare's is first in the satirist's mind, and at the mention of plays he says, 'Now, I know you are off! nothing goes down with you but Shakspeare's plays; you can talk of nothing but Shakspeare.' This notice is intensely interesting. It is the gird of an envious rival, who pays unwilling tribute to our poet's increasing popularity, and at the same time gives us the most perfect little sketch of the man and his manners, as Marston saw him! He has marked his reticence in such company as that of Playwrights and Players; only speaking upon what to them would be the subject of subjects; and he feels well enough that he has never got at him. Now, he says, 'I have him who is so difficult to get at.' He is known also as a great maker of extracts; he keeps a common-place book filled from out his huge long-accumulating stock of plays. So that he has been

a diligent collector of dramas, or maker of notes, and a great student of his special art. It has been his custom to copy the best things he met with into his scrap-book. The satirist almost repeats Greene's 'Johannes Fac-totum' in his description of our Poet's varied ability, his aptness in doing many things with as much earnestness as though each were the one thing he came into this world to do. He writes, he rails, he jests, he courts (what not?). And all —this is how the malevolent rival accounts for the abounding genius!—and all from out his collection of plays and the scraps hoarded in his common-place book. Marston's 'satyres' were published in 1598, and this is evidently written at the moment when 'Romeo and Juliet' is in the height of its success. It is *the* new pathetic tragedy of these lines. Also, the image of the love-poet courting Lesbia's eyes is obviously suggested by the balcony scene of this play.

It is curious, too, that he should ask which of the two is the better actor—Shakspeare or Burbage? '*He speaks in print*' reminds us of Hamlet's speech to the players. According to this witness, it would look as though the Poet had there figured himself for us somewhat as his contemporaries saw him amongst his own company of players. It makes one wonder how much he had to do personally with the great acting of Burbage, in moulding such an embodiment of his own conceptions, and inspiring the player when spirit sharpened spirit and face kindled face. He was six years older than Burbage, and the great Master of his Art. Of course, Marston's notice is meant to be satirical, although he wriggles in vain to raise a smile at his subject. This writer has another mean 'gird' at our Poet in his 'What you Will' (act ii. sc. 1)—

> 'Ha! he mounts Chirall on the wings of fame,
> *A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!*
> Look thee, *I speak play scraps!*'

which still further helps to identify Shakspeare by a double allusion.

I have previously remarked that no doubt Shakspeare gave his contemporaries as good as they sent, and although we may be able to decipher but few of his replies, one at least is very definite. We have seen that John Davies of Hereford made various allusions to Shakspeare. We are very glad of these now in the dearth of information. But we may well imagine that if anything was particularly unbearable to our Poet, it must have been the pat of approbation bestowed on him by this garrulous old gentleman and persevering poetiser. Accordingly, as I conjecture, Shakspeare does flash fire and lighten from his cloud upon him and his descriptions in the person of 'Menenius.'[1] Thrice had Davies tried to compliment our Poet at the expense of his profession, and pitied him that Fortune had not put him to better uses. This he has done most noticeably in his poem entitled 'Microcosmus.' He had also addressed Shakspeare as 'our English Terence' thus—

'Some say good Will, which I in sport do sing,
Hadst thou not plaid some kingly parts in sport,
Thou hadst bin a companion for a King,
And been a king among the meaner sort.
Some others rail; but rail as they think fit,
Thou hast no railing, but a reigning wit:
And honesty thou sow'st, which they do reape,
So to increase their stocke, which they do keepe.'

The Poet replies:—'I am known to be a *humourous patrician*, and one that loves a cup of hot wine with not a drop of allaying Tyber in't; *said to be something imperfect*; hasty and tinder-like upon too trivial motion. What I think I utter, and spend my malice in my breath, &c. . . . if you see this in the *Map of my Microcosm*,

[1] 'Coriolanus,' act ii. sc. 1.

follows it that I am known well enough too? What harm can your bisson conspectuities glean out of this character, if I be known well enough too?' Not only does Shakspeare take him by the beard to smite him thus and give him, as Hood says, two black eyes for being blind, but he has pluralised the old schoolmaster for the pleasure of thrashing him double. 'I cannot say your worships have delivered the *matter well*, when I find the ass in compound with the major part of your syllables, and though I must be content to bear with those that say you are reverend grave men, yet they lie deadly that tell you you have good faces. You know neither me, yourselves, nor anything!' Our Poet had a double reason for his retort. He resents what Davies had said of the stage as well as of himself and Burbage. He speaks for the Company in general. He says in effect—'You have sat in judgement, you ridiculous old ass, but you have not handled the matter wisely or well. And as for the railing that we are charged with, why, *our very priests must become mockers if they shall encounter such ridiculous subjects as you are.* When you speak best unto the purpose it is not worth the wagging of your beard.'

It will not be easy to detect any dramatic motive in these replies of Menenius; there was no sufficient cause in the words of the Tribunes: they had not drawn the *map of his Microcosm*; had not characterised him at all, but merely remarked 'you are well enough known, too!' No one can, I think, compare what Davies wrote of our Poet in his three different poems with this outburst of Menenius' without seeing that the Poet has here expressed the personal annoyance of himself and fellows. We may, perhaps, take it as a slight additional indication of Shakspeare's having John Davies in mind that nearly the next words spoken by Menenius on hearing that Coriolanus is returning home are, 'Take my cap, Jupiter, and I thank thee;' and poor John had, in lines already

quoted, greeted Southampton on his release from the Tower, with 'Southampton, up thy cap to heaven fling!'

We shall get a curious side-glimpse, and, to some extent, gauge how far Shakspeare was known to his contemporaries generally in the year 1600, by turning over the pages of 'England's Parnassus,' in the 'Heliconia.' Here we come upon numerous quotations from the 'Lucrece' and 'Venus and Adonis,' but the extracts from the Plays are most insignificant. Yet at the time mentioned he had in all probability produced some twenty of his dramas, including the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' 'Merchant of Venice,' 'Taming of the Shrew,' 'Romeo and Juliet,' with other fine works of his early and middle periods.

A breath of the passionate fragrance of the last-named dainty drama had reached beyond the stage. But how could the editor make so few extracts from such a mine of wealth, and snatch no more from its 'dark of diamonds?' He is in search of illustrations for given subjects, each of which Shakspeare has enriched with pictures beyond those of all other writers. He possesses taste enough to quote many of the choicest passages from Spenser's poetry. The inference is inevitable that the Poet and the poetry revealed to us in Shakspeare's Plays were unknown to Robert Allot, and possibly he only quoted at second-hand.

A playwright was not looked upon as a poet, so much as a worker for the theatre. Spenser was the great Apollo of his age. He had the true mythological touch and classical tread. Accordingly the 'Heliconia' contains some 370 quotations from Spenser and only 70 from Shakspeare; these mainly from his two poems. As late as 1605 Richard Barnefield, in his 'Lady Pecunia,' praises Shakspeare for his Poems, but has not a word for the Plays.

It was impossible for Shakspeare's contemporaries to know what there was in his works as we know them. They could not help knowing of his dramatic successes, and would often feel these to be unaccountable. But there

was no great reading public—no criticism to bring out the hidden secrets of his genius. And if there had been, the drama was comparatively an unpublished literature. In this fact we may perceive one great reason why a man like Bacon, for example, lived so long in the same city as Shakspeare without discovering him, and possibly left the world without knowing what he had missed on the passage.

(It seems impossible that they should not have met personally in the company of Essex and Southampton, but Bacon makes no mention of Shakspeare, and in all likelihood never penetrated the Player's mask.)

The early poems were well known, and some of the sonnets were in circulation, but no one could predicate from these the stupendous genius that orbed out and reached its full circle in 'Lear,' and the other great Tragedies.

He was better known within the Theatre, and there Ben Jonson being himself a player and playwright, probably got the truest glimpse of Shakspeare's mental stature, although I doubt not he fancied himself by much the better writer. Ben could supply a 'tag' to the end of a life as well as to the end of a play, and, when in the mood, sweat sincerity with all his bodily bulk. But, what are we to think of his compliment to the 'true-filed line' when it is on record that he did not think the lines 'well-filed,' for when the Players boasted that Shakspeare wrote so easily he never blotted out a line, Ben wished he had blotted out a thousand. And if we are to believe Drummond, Jonson thought Shakspeare 'wanted art, and sometimes sense;' which is countenanced by his own words—'he redeemed his vices by his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned.' If Jonson had really known what Shakspeare had done for the stage, for dramatic poetry, for English Literature, how could he afterwards boast that he himself would yet 'raise the

despised head of Poetry; stripping her out of those rotten and base rags wherewith the times have adulterated her form and restore her to her primitive use and majesty, and render her worthy to be embraced and kissed of all the great and master spirits of the world.' This, after Shakspeare had found Poetry on the stage the slave of drudgery, the menial of the mob, and took her by the hand, like his own Marina, and led her forth apparelled in all freshness of the spring; fairer to look on than the 'evening air, clad in the beauty of ten thousand stars,' and made her the nursing mother of children strong and splendid; set her on a throne and crowned her as a queen whose subjects are wide humanity; whose realm is the world.

Ben's mind was not of a kind to jump with that of Shakspeare in its largest leaps. He was the genuine prototype of the critical kind that has yet a few living specimens, in those persons who still persist in looking upon Shakspeare as a writer far too redundant in expression. They appear to think the foliage waving above too lusty and large for the sustaining rootage below. They have a feeling that Shakspeare was a Poet marvellously endowed by Nature, but deficient in Art, the truth being, that what they mean by Art is the smack of consciousness in the finish left so apparent that the poetry is, as it were, stereotyped, and the finish gives to it a kind of metallic face; something on the surface firm to the touch, and flattering to a certain critical sense.

They like their poetry to be fossilised and wear a recognisable pattern. Whereas Shakspeare's is all alive, and illuminated from within; as full of Nature in a book as the flowers are in the field.

The secret which, in Shakspeare, is unfathomable can be found out in the works of more self-conscious men. In them Nature is subordinate to Art. But this is not the greatest Art; it is the lesser Art, made more striking because there is less Nature.

His is not the serene art of Sophocles; it does not always smile severely on the surface. Then he has—

> 'Such miracles performed in play,
> Such letting Nature have its way!'

and the Nature is so boundless, we have to traverse such an infinity of suggestiveness, that it is not easy for us to beat the bounds. But the Art of Shakspeare transcends all other Art in kind as much as the inscrutable beauty of soul transcends the apparent beauty of form and feature; and his judgment is as sure as his genius is capacious. Judge him not by Greek Drama or French Art, but accept the conditions under which he wrought, the national nature with which he dealt, and he has reached the pure simplicity of utter perfection fifty times over to any other Poet's once! In all Shakspeare's great Plays his Art is even more consummate, though less apparent, than that of Milton, and it holds the infinitely larger system of human world and starry brood of mind in its wider revolutions, with as safe a tug of gravitation. It is the testimony of all the greatest and most modest men that the longer they read his works the more reasons they find to admire his marvellous wisdom, and his transcendent intuition in all mysteries of Law as well as knowledge of life.

Harvey's lusty *réveille* and Ben Jonson's eulogy notwithstanding, it is quite demonstrable that Shakspeare's contemporaries had no adequate conception of what manner of man or majesty of mind were amongst them. We know him better than they did! He came upon the stage of his century like the merest lighter of a theatre. He kindled there such a splendour and jetted such 'brave fire' as the world never before saw. He did his work so silently, greeted his fellows so pleasantly, and retired so quietly, that the men whose faces now shine for us, chiefly from his reflected light, did not notice him sufficiently to tell us what he was like; did not see that this man Shakspeare

had come to bring a new soul into the land—that in his plays the spirit of a new faith was to obtain magnificent embodiment—that here was the spontaneous effort of the national spirit to assert itself in our literature, and stand forth free from the old Greek tyranny which might otherwise have continued to crush our drama, as it seems to have crippled our sculpture to this day—that in these plays all the rills of language and knowledge running from other lands were to be merged and made one in this great ocean of English life. Not one of them saw clearly as we do that whereas Homer was the poet of Greece, and Dante the poet of Italy, this gentle Willie Shakspeare, player and playwright, was destined to be the Poet of a World!

His real glory was unguessed at! They could have given him no assurance of the 'all-hail hereafter;' the lofty expansion of his fame that now fills the great Globe Theatre of our world! They never dreamed of the imperial way in which the Player should ascend his throne, to set the wide round ringing whose vast arch reverberates his voice from side to side, whilst wave on wave, age after age, the pæan of applause is caught up and continued and rolled on for ever by the passing Generations!

I often think that one reason why he left no greater personal impression on them was because he was so much of a good fellow in general; his nature was so commonly human and perfect all round, as to seem to them nothing remarkable in particular. His greatness of soul was not of a kind to puff out any personal peculiarities, or manners 'high fantastical.' He did not take his seat in a crowding company with the bodily bulge of big Ben, or tread on their toes with the vast weight of his 'mountain belly' and hodman's shoulders, nor come in contact with them as Ben would, with the full force of his hard head and 'rocky face.' Shakspeare's personal influence was not of the sort that is so palpably felt at all times, and often most politely acknowledged. He must have moved amongst them more

like an Immortal invisible; the deity being hidden in the humanity. There was room in his serene and spacious soul for the whole of his stage-contemporaries to sit at feast. His influence embraced them, lifted them out of themselves, floated them up from earth; and while their veins ran quicksilver, and the life within them lightened, they would shout with *Matheo*, 'Do we not fly high?' Are we not amazingly clever fellows? Don't we astonish ourselves?—How little they knew what they owed to the mighty one in their midst! How little could they gauge the virtue of his presence which wrapped them in a diviner ether! When we breathe in a larger life, and a ruddier health from the atmosphere that surrounds us and sets us swimming in a sea of heart's-ease, we seldom pause to estimate how much in weight the atmosphere presses to the square inch! So was it with the personal influence of Shakspeare upon his fellows. They felt the exaltation, the invisible radiation of health, the flowing humanity that filled their felicity to the brim; but did not think of the weight of greatness that he brought to bear on every square inch of them. The Spirit of the Age sat in their very midst, but it moved them so naturally they forgot to note its personal features, and he was not the man to be flashing his immortal jewel in their eyes on purpose to call attention to it.

Big Ben took care to bequeath his body as well as his mind to us. We know how much flesh he carried. We know his love of good eating and strong drink; his self assertiveness and lust of power. We know that he required a high tide of drink before he could launch himself and get well afloat, and that amongst the Elizabethan song-birds he was named, after his beloved liquor, a 'Canary' bird. One cannot help fancying that Shakspeare, as he sat quietly listening to Ben's brag, got many a hint for the fattening and glorifying of his own Falstaff. How different it is with our Poet! We get no

glimpse of him in his cups. The names they give him, however, are significant. They call him the 'gentle Willie,' the 'beloved,' the 'honey-tongued.' Fuller's description gives us an impression that Ben Jonson was no match for Shakspeare in mental quickness when they met in their wit-combats at the 'Mermaid.' Ben carried most in sight; Shakspeare more out of sight. For the rest, there is not much to show us what the man Shakspeare was, or to tell us that his fellows knew what he was. But their silence is full of meaning. It tells that he was not an extraordinary man in the vulgar sense, which means something peculiar, and startling at first sight. He must have been too complete a man to be marked out by that which implies incompleteness—some special faculty held up for wonder, and half picked out by disparity on the other side; as the valley's depth becomes a portion of the mountain's height. There was nothing of this about Shakspeare. And his completeness, his ripeness all round, his level height, his subtle serenity, would all tend to hide his greatness from them. They can tell us the shape of Greene's beard, which he 'cherished continually, without cutting; a jolly long red peak, like the spire of a steeple, whereat a man might hang a jewel, it was so sharp and pendant;' his 'continual *shifting of lodgings*,' the nasal sound of Ben Jonson's voice, and his face 'punched full of eyelet holes like the lid of a warming-pan.' But they tell us nothing in this kind about Shakspeare, man or manner, and this tells us much. There was that in him which overflowed all externals.

We know they thought him a man of sweet temper and ready wit, honest and frank, of an open and free nature, very gentle and loveable, and as sociable a good fellow as ever lived. And, indeed, he must have been the best of all good fellows that ever was so wise a man. He could make merry with those roystering

madcaps at the Mermaid, who heard the 'chimes at midnight' but did not heed them, and he could preserve the eternal rights of his own soul, and keep sacred its brooding solitude. He could be the tricksy spirit of mad whim and waggery; the very soul of solemn thought; one of the sprightliest maskers at the carnival of high spirits he could go home majestic in his sadness as he had been glorious in his gladness, and brood over what he had seen of life with a mild melancholy such as made his own life bloom more inwardly, and put forth those loveliest creations of his which seem to have unfolded in the still and balmy night-time when men slept, and the flowers in his soul's garden were fed with gracious dews from heaven.

He had his enemies, but no man in Shakspeare's lifetime ever ventured to assail his reputation. Greene makes no such charge as that which has been gathered from the sonnets. The only thing he can show is that Shakspeare was growing too successful for him. Our great Poet enters into none of their little quarrels. When they work themselves up into a passion with him, he takes no notice, or, if he does, it is to silently work them up into his next play. Whilst men like Marlowe drive furiously down the broad road to destruction, with passions four abreast, he passes quietly on his watchful way with serene habit and face erect, respected and self-respecting. He must have had his temptations to wave off or whistle down, and pick his way through the mire of our world; but this he does most happily and cleanly, and he comes forth with no visible stains, or mud, clinging to him. Not from any sediment of vice and folly did he gather all those precious grains of golden wisdom. Not from his sowing a bountiful crop of wild oats do we reap that rich harvest of his works. He must have been a good man to have been so loveable and to have had the health that resisted so well the infection of his time and place.

One great cause of Shakspeare's contemporaries telling us no more about him is still operant against our making him out in his works. He was one of the least self-conscious men, and so he is the least personally visible in his writings. This was the condition of his greatness. He was to be so unsconscious of self as to be purely reflective of all passing forms. If he had been a lesser man, he would have shown us more of himself. If more imperfect, he would have revealed more idiosyncracy. We should have caught him taking a peep at himself in the dramatic mirror. But Shakspeare's nature is all mirror to the world around him. A more conscious man would have managed to make the darkness that hides him from us a sort of lamp-shade which should concentrate the light on his own features, when he looked up in some self-complaisant pause. Not so Shakspeare: he throws all the light on his work, and bends over it so intently that it is most difficult to get a glimpse of his face. Our sole chance is to watch him at his work, and note his human leanings and personal relationships.

In his first poem, 'the first heir of my invention,' 'Venus and Adonis,' we may learn one or two out-of-door facts of the Poet's life. Whether he was a deer-stealer or not, it is certain he had been on the track of a hare. He knew poor puss's form, and had often seen her powdering the dew-drops into mist as she ran. He is intimately acquainted with her habits. At the mention of her name his thoughts are all off a-coursing at once, and his feeling is in full cry. He had the English spirit of sport in his blood, such as runs through the whole race from peer to poacher. He was likewise a genuine lover of horses, and could show off the 'points' of a thoroughbred in a description that would tell at Newmarket. In these early poems, which were most probably written in the country, we find the youth of Shakspeare all in flower and full of colour. It was the hey-day in which it looks as

though the battlements of heaven may be scaled by sheer leaps of the young blood, the senses are so keenly alive. The delighted spirit is in its first love with life, and Venus is the goddess of the youthful fancy. The outer world is all picture to the eye, the inner world all music and dancing. External nature makes the deepest, though often unconscious, impression at this time, when love works within and beauty without at the making of a boy into a poet.

The sonnets of Shakspeare afford us the most certain means whereby we can get at the man. Nothing else except the two prose dedications speaks to us so assuredly with his own voice, or tells us so unmistakably what were his own feelings and thoughts under various interesting circumstances of his own life. Our difficulty has been to get the right interpretation of the sonnets, and know when Shakspeare is really speaking in his own person, and where he gives utterance to the thoughts and feelings of another. We often heard the voice of Shakspeare; we knew the voice, and yet we did not get at the man. It was as though he were speaking in the next room; there was a partition-wall between us. We followed the voice, according to some theory of interpreting the sonnets, but when we got into the next room Shakspeare was not there. Still, the voice, like that of the ghost of Hamlet's father, kept breaking in, compelling us to follow it. The chief cause of this intangibility, and the main reason why so many of these sonnets, seemingly personal, did not strike straight home to us, with the full force that is coiled up in their lines, will be found in the conditions under which they were written, and in the fact that the personal and dramatic ones have been mixed up, to all appearance, inextricably. Shakspeare was not the man to miss his mark, whatever that may have been, only we were not exactly the objects of his aim. We are now able for the first time since the poetry was

written to make the mystery clear; stand in the right position to judge of what is going on, get the relationship of writer and reader rightly adjusted, fathom the secret history and know how much and what part of Shakspeare's character is visible in the sonnets. Unfortunately he wrote them under a very limited liability law of relationship. It was not his intention to write of himself, but of his friend. And here, as elsewhere, that amazing negative capacity of his has suppressed so much that we would have given anything to know. They have no introspection. In the most personal of them the eye is outward-looking; it does not brood within for any self revelation.

It must not be thought, however, that we are losing sight of Shakspeare's personality whilst eliminating the impersonal sonnets. We are drawing all the more closely to himself. We are getting at him in another way. We do not find him quite so melancholy, discontented, and morbidly sensitive as many have imagined him, but much more like what he is imaged in his other works, and pourtrayed in that picture of hilarious health and constitutional jocundity—the Stratford bust. Our Shakspeare of the Sonnets has no reason to plead guilty to abuses of kindness and all sorts of inexplicable wilfulness and ingratitude, or to make continual appeal to the loving charity which has been drawn upon to the utmost.

In our reading we find that Shakspeare, in which the just soul of the world believes, in spite of appearances having been so wrongly interpreted. The Shakspeare of those manly qualities to which all the contemporary testimony pays tribute. The Shakspeare of whom Chettle begs pardon, for the words of Greene, because he has found that 'divers of worship,' many of worth, have 'reported his uprightness.' The Shakspeare of whom Southampton testifies that he is of good reputation, deserving of favour, and his especial friend.

What we lose sight of is the phantom Shakspeare who could ungraciously forget his early friend, to whom he had made public promises, given hostages for the future, and dedicated love without end; who could sing of his friend's eternal truth, after passionately denouncing his falsehood, and talk of locking up his jewel lest it should be stolen after it had been filched from him; who could slavishly prostrate himself at the feet of a boy; who could hypocritically reprove his friend for his loose conduct and lament his immoralities, whilst he himself, a married man of ripe age, was partner with the boy in an intrigue with some married woman; who could accuse himself of all sorts of inconsistent things, grow querulous at the slightest cause, and ask pity on all kinds of false pretences; who could write sonnets on his own and his friend's disgraceful amours, and supply copies to their friends for the purpose of raising a laugh at their mutual frailty—for *such, in defiance of dates, facts, and all that we know of our Poet's life and character, or gather from his works*, is the Shakspeare of Messrs. Boaden and Brown's theory of the Sonnets—and we have found the real man as he once lived, and loved his friend Southampton, and showed an interest in his passion for Elizabeth Vernon; took sides with them when they were thwarted by the caprice of the Queen, and resented it very strongly; made the most ingenious defence, in play and in earnest, for his friend; fought for him against 'old Time,' and 'evil Fortune,' and 'all-oblivious enmity;' laboured to polish his virtues when they rusted, and lifted them up shiningly in the eyes of his beloved, and strove to shield them from the tarnishing breath of scandal; probably seeing many sad things and having many sad thoughts, but holding on to him faithful and loving to the end. There is nothing to show that his moral supremacy was not absolute as his mental; no grovelling humility of the slavish sort, nothing but

that simple modesty which is the natural and perfect grace of greatness. Such is the restored likeness of our Shakspeare-Portrait which has been shamefully abused and far worse daubed over than his bust at Stratford. The world will not fail to recognise the truer resemblance and the purer life-colour of this portrait. I have also the pleasure of doing justice to the robbed and much-wronged Earl of Southampton, the only man whom Shakspeare ever inscribed to publicly, and the man who really begot the Sonnets of Shakspeare, although William Herbert became the 'only obtainer' of them, the 'bringer-forth' for the publishing purpose of Thorpe.

To come to the personal features of our newly-discovered likeness, we see that the Shakspeare of the Sonnets is as wise and practical a man as him of the Globe Theatre and the Plays. He did not set out to write sonnets on purpose to tell his friend about himself and his doings and miss his mark by forgetting to write those things which we are all most anxious to know!

Incidentally and indirectly he tells us a good deal about himself; and at times we see his very face wearing a startling look of life. He tells us how much the friendship of Southampton was to him during the earlier period when he stood in the twilight and could hardly see his way clearly. We see how modestly he looked upon his own works; how little he thought of wearing such a halo of renown. Whilst making promises of immortality for his friend in the sonnets he expresses no hope, no consciousness of living on either in them or the plays. There is one glance at the Theatre in sonnet 100 (p. 252), and he there speaks of his Muse as spending her fury on some worthless song, or ballad subject, and darkening her power to give the base matter light, instead of writing about his friend.

Once or twice we see him face to face with grief; he

comes nestling into our hearts in the lowliest attitude, and asserts our common human relationship in the most touching way. But, he did not seek to pierce us with his own sharp and thorny thoughts; his object was to offer his friend their bloom and fragrancy. And the sonnets afford us this self-luminous certainty. Shakspeare could not have reproached and reproved Southampton for his moral laxity if he had not himself walked uprightly under 'awful rule and right supremacy:' could not have bewailed the Earl's dwelling in infectious society if his own moral health had not been sound. His personal bearing must have been blameless for him to express his jealousy of evil companions. He could not have dared to intimate that his young friend was not one of those who are 'lords and owners of their faces' unless he were known to be 'king over himself.'

Also we have done for ever with '*William the Melancholy.*' Only a very false view of the sonnets could have led any one to imagine that Shakspeare was a melancholy man. Such a phantasm was begotten on a cloud of the brain, and has no existence in reality. It may not always have been honestly spoken out, yet it has been inwardly believed that his sins confessed in the sonnets were the chief cause of his supposed sadness: that the moping, abject condition in which he is assumed to have been at times, was owing to his misplaced affections and the avenging Nemesis that, no doubt, pursued him and whipped him back to the wife whom he had deserted.

This personal interpretation of the sonnets has deepened the character of Shakspeare in the mind of many to a Rembrandtish depth of shadow, and made Schlegel amongst others think that these glimpses of the internal workings of the Poet's spirit show it to have been of all others the most deeply sorrowful and tragic! And the critic concludes that the inmost feelings of the Poet's heart, the depths of his peculiar, concentrated and solitary spirit,

could be agitated only by the mournful voice of nature. No view could be falser. His soul was *not* like a star that dwelt apart in lonely majesty and cold splendour remote from men. Impersonal as he is, we do not feel that to be the result of remoteness. Someway we lose him from very nearness rather than because of his distance from us. Not in isolation, but by a delightful interfusion does he really pass into invisibility.

It was said by Mr. Hallam, 'There seems to have been a period of Shakspeare's life when his heart was ill at ease, and ill content with the world or his own conscience: the memory of hours mis-spent, the pang of affection misplaced or unrequited, the experience of man's worser nature, which intercourse with ill-chosen associates, by choice or circumstance, peculiarly teaches —these, as they sank down into the depths of his great mind, seem not only to have inspired into it the conception of "Lear" and "Timon," but that of one primary character, the censurer of mankind.' So it may have *seemed*, but so it is not in fact. This is but an illusion of those who have accepted the sonnets as autobiographic revelations. All that is observable is that the great stream of his expanding power runs darker with depth, and if the searchings into the human heart grow more curious and profound, and the tragedy is palled in more awful sombreness, and the poetry draws our pleasure with approving tears out of deeper soundings of pain, the comedy is also richer and more real, the humour is as smiling as the terror is sublime; there is no unhappy laughter in it, no jesting with a sad brow; whilst the tender images of grace and purity are bodied forth more movingly attired than ever. We can match 'Hamlet' with the 'Merry Wives,' 'Lear' with 'Twelfth Night,' and pair off Timon, the hater of men, with Cressida and Cleopatra, who were as great lovers of them; and his later, most precious creations, Desdemona, Cordelia, Virgilia, Perdita, Miranda, Imogen, give

no hint of any unsoundness in the Poet's moral nature. If he wrote more tragedy as he grew older, that was but the natural result of his growing wiser, his meditations on life were graver; the sad-looking bloom had gathered on the fuller-ripened life-fruit. What says the prologue to King Henry VIII.?—

> 'I come no more to make you laugh; things now
> That bear a weighty and a serious brow,
> Sad, high and working, full of state and woe,
> Such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow,
> We now present.'

It is impossible to commune with the spirit of Shakspeare in his works and not feel that he was essentially a cheerful man and full of healthy gladness, that his royal soul was magnificently lodged in a fine *physique*, and looked out on life with a large contentment; that his conscience was clear and his spiritual pulse sober. This is manifest in his poems written at an age when most youngsters are wanton with sadness. There is no sadness in his first song; he sustains a merry note lustily; the 'Venus and Adonis,' the 'Lover's Complaint,' are brim-full of health; they bespeak the ruddy English heart, the sunbrowned mirth, 'country quicksilver,' and country cheer. The royal blood of his happy health runs and riots in their rural vein. It is shown in his hearty and continuous way of working. It is proved by his great delight in common human nature, and his full satisfaction in the world as he found it. It is supremely shown in the nature of his whole work. A reigning cheerfulness was the sovereign quality of the man, and his art is dedicated to Joy. No one ever did so much in the poetic sphere to make men nobly happy. A most profound and perennial cheerfulness of soul he must have had to bring so bright a smile to the surface, and put so pleasurable a colour into the face of human life, which never shone more round and rosy than it does in his eyes at times; he who so well knew what an infinite of sorrow

may brood beneath; what sunless depths of sadness and lonely leafless wastes of misery; who felt so intimately its old heartache and pain; its mystery of evil and all the pathetic pangs with which Nature gives birth to Good!

The dramatic mood could be troubled, contemplative, melancholy, according to his purpose, but the man himself was of a happy temperament. A melancholy man must have been more self-conscious, and shut up within limits indefinitely narrower.

We may depend upon it that such sunny smiling fruits of living as his works offer to us did not spring out of any root of bitterness in his own experience; they are ripe on the lower branches as well as on the highest; are sound and sweet to the core, and show no least sign of having been gnawn or pierced by the worm that dies not. Had he felt sad for himself it would have broken out, if at all, not lugubriously, but in a very humorous sadness—the diamond-point of wit pricking the gathering tear before it was fairly formed, or the drops would have been shaken down in a sun-shower. The true Shakspearian sadness is more nearly expressed in Mercutio and some of the clowns, like the 'fool' in 'Lear,' for which he had a special fondness and, I fancy, often played the part with zest. Hence the humour is just sadness grown honey-ripe! Beside which, we get no suggestion from his contemporaries of a melancholy man. They never saw him in the dumps like John Ford. So far as he left any impression on them it was that of a gracious and pleasant man, full of good spirits, equable at a cheerful height. They certainly saw nothing of the social 'outcast' or the friendless, melancholy man. They caught no writhing of the face that indicated the devouring secret within his breast! They never suspected that he had gone about 'frantic-mad with evermore unrest.' If so miserable a sinner in private, he must have been in public a sad rogue, a rare hypocrite! Lastly, it is impossible to study the bust at Stratford and think of

it as the image of a melancholy man. It is the dropped mask of a happy-wise spirit, whose pleasantry was so ingrained that the mask keeps on smiling after death in merry memory of a smiling soul. Looking on this Bust, we feel that he must have been a glorious jolly personage, in whom the national spirit was most Englishly embodied, just as his Works most fully embody the national spirit. Thus all the evidence of personal testimony, of work, of character, and disposition is arrayed against this modern inference that is as false as the sands on which it was founded, and we may now let it pass away for ever.

The sadness of the early sonnets is on behalf of the friend for whom he utters so many complaints against unkindly Fortune.

The true personal application of the latter sonnets is, not that Shakspeare was gloomy and guilty enough to write them for himself, but that he had the exuberant jollity, the lax gaiety to write them for the young gallant, Herbert.

There is one thing in the sonnets that brings the man very closely home to me. This is his glancing in the glass at times to compare his age and looks with those of his young friend. No doubt he purposely gives the Earl the full difference in opposing Autumn with April, but I fancy there was considerable truth in it. So great is my belief in the Poet's truth to Nature that I feel he had a rough skin and was jocose on the subject—stroking his chin in a humorous way, as who should say look at my old weather-beaten brown face—'my glass shows me myself indeed, beaten and chapped with tanned antiquity!' And, if as an actor, he kept the chin shaved and the beard grew strong and stubby, it would add to the roughness. There seems to be a look of this in the Droeshout Etching. The 73rd sonnet, which is very pathetic, would lead us to suspect that the Poet not only thought himself old-looking, but that he also felt prema-

turely aged before he left London for his own native air. He had done so much work, and drawn so much on his own life; such ardours had gone out of him. He could not have been forty years old, and yet the sonnet paints the black bars of the coming night as falling across his early sunset path. It is very touching, if we think of it as pourtraying our own Shakspeare:—

'The time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare, ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self that seals up all in rest;
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of my youth doth lie
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.'

This has a touch of the yellowish tinge that will come over the literary vision at times, when a bit of the best work has been lately done. But, as I have before said, the tone is as much that of illness as of age. He must have recovered health again, and his life put forth a new leaf in its Stratford privacy, for he grew some of his lustiest evergreens there; did some of his best work, bright with health, and created two of his most loveable women, 'Imogen' and 'Perdita,' full of English sweetness to the core, with the pure breath of his country life breathing fragrantly through them.

From his dramas we may obtain some traits of personality, and a few facts of Shakspeare's own life. It is very interesting to watch the growth of his mind. We can get no right estimate of the man unless we do this, and see how he worked, and how he waxed in energy and capacity; how, as the stream of his life flowed on, the poetry grows

clearer and is purified by time and travel. Shakspeare did not come into the world ready-made, nor bringing his poetry ready written. Nor does his supereminence lie in some unknown, abnormal power of creating poetry and adding it to life and nature. He was one of the greatest Realists that ever wrote. He got his poetry out of life, and had to begin at the beginning. He must have converted everything into force for that rare motion of inner life which made the outer music of his poetry. Of course he had a most marvellous illumination of the seeing eye, a power unparagoned for absorbing knowledge, a nature rich and vital for all the hard actualities of fact to unfold in and put forth their loveliest flower; a large and loving spirit that would brood over the meanest materials until the influence had passed into them and transfigured them past our finding out. And yet this man of magnificent resources, so lavish of his wealth, must have been a very miser in hoarding up the least fruits of life and experience. All life was picture and all persons portraiture to him; every hint would be full of meaning, if not to-day, then he would garner it up for seed in its season. Dull bits of fact would lie by in the grub until he could warm them into life and give them wings. When he wrote—'Let us cast away nothing, for we may live to have need of such a verse,' he gave expression to a personal trait.

He relies on reality as the engineer on the rock, but his cunning in transforming matter into spirit is alike subtle with his art of vanishing from view in his own person. When the infinite spaces of his thought are spanned and the scaffolding disappears as though all fairy world had lent a hand to the labour, and the creation is finished like an air-hung work of wonder, it is almost as difficult to connect it with the real earth whereon he built as it would be to find the bases of the rainbow. The way in which he creates for immortality out of the

veriest dust of the earth, deals divinely with things most grossly mortal, and conjures the loftiest sublimities from the homeliest realities, is one of the great Shakspearian secrets. As a slight example, see the lines in Macbeth—

> 'The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
> Is left this *vault* to brag of!'

Here are Earth and Heaven, Wine-cellar and the concave Vast wedded in a word, with one fusing flash of his imagination! But who thinks or dares to think of the idea, as first conceived, in the august presence of its after-shape?

Then, the early works are full of puns and comparisons, and overrun with imagery. Here he plays more with the shadows of things, and does not reach the utmost reality. He played with words, says Robert Gould, in his satire of the 'Playhouse,' to 'please a quibbling age.' And we feel that he despised himself for doing so. He had no heart in it. The clown, in 'Twelfth Night,' says 'a sentence is but a Cheveril glove to a good wit; how quick the wrong side may be turned outward!' The reply of Viola shows that Shakspeare felt the habit of punning degrading, and that all singleness of language is lost in this aiming at witty double meaning: 'Nay, that's certain; they that dally nicely with words, may quickly make them wanton.' No bitterer comment was ever made on the confirmed habit of jesting with meanings and playing with words than he himself supplies in one of his early plays, 'Love's Labour's Lost,' where 'my Lord Biron' is told to practise his witticisms for twelve months upon the sick and dying in an hospital, and make the 'pained impotent to smile.'

The early plays contain the 'spring and foison' of Shakspeare's poetic life, overrunning with leafy richness and the luxuriant undergrowth of his poetry. And how the stature and strength of his work increases year by

year, striking root yet deeper and broader in English earth, but lifting up its stately branches into airy regions. What a growth from the 'Two Gentlemen of Verona' to 'Lear;' from the slender sapling to the tree whose girth we may not span! We can see how his expression chastens and grows sublime with simplicity; rich with the most precious plainness of speech. We may see also in his early plays what were his personal relations to the England of that memorable time which helped to mould him: see how the war stirred his nature to its roots, and made them clasp England with all their fibres: we may see how he fought the Spaniard in feeling, and helped to shatter their armadas. We learn how these things made him turn to his country's history, and pourtray its past and exalt its heroes in the eyes of Englishmen. How often does he show them the curse of civil strife, and read them the lesson that England is safe so long as she is united! Thus he lets us know how true an Englishman he was; how full of patriotic fire and communicative warmth.

The rest of the world are welcome to prove him a cosmopolitan; but we know where his nationality lies. He was a dear lover of this dear land of ours. He loved her homely face, and took to his heart her 'tight little' form, that is so embraceable! He loved her tender glory of green grass, her grey skies, her miles on miles of apple-bloom in spring time, her valleys brim-full of the rich harvest-gold in autumn; her leafy lanes and field-paths, and lazy, loitering river-reaches; her hamlets nestling in the quiet heart of rural life; her scarred old Gothic towers and mellow red-brick chimneys with their Tudor twist, and white cottages peeping through the roses and honeysuckles. We know how he loved his own native woods and wild flowers, the daisy, the primrose, the wild honeysuckle, the cowslip, and most of all, the violet. This was his darling of our field flowers.

And most lovingly has he distilled or expressed the spirit of the violet into one of his sweetest women, and called her Viola! His favourite birds also are the common homely English singing birds, the lark and nightingale, the cuckoo and blackbird that sang to Shakspeare in his childhood and still sing to-day in the pleasant woods of Warwickshire. He loved all that we call and prize as 'so English.' He loved the heroes whom he saw round him in every-day life, the hardy, bronzed mariners that he saw go sailing 'Westward, Ho:' Indeed, the mention of England's name offers one of our best opportunities for a personal recognition; when an English thought has struck him, how he brands the 'mark of the lion' on his lines!

There are times when he quite overruns the speech of a character with the fulness of his own English feeling. In one or two instances this is very striking; for example, in that speech of old Gaunt's in 'Richard II.,' at the name of England the writer is off, and cannot stop. His own young blood leaps along the shrunken veins of grave and aged Gaunt; Shakspeare's own heart throbs through the whole speech; the dramatic mask grows transparent with the light of his own kindled face, and you know it is Shakspeare's own features behind; his own voice that is speaking. A fact that he had forgotten for the moment, because Nature was sometimes too strong for his earlier art. Again, we have but to read the speech of King Harry V., on the night, or rather the dawn, of Agincourt, to feel how keen was the thrill of Shakspeare's proud patriotism. Harry was a hero after our Poet's own English heart, and he takes great delight in such a character. His thoughts grow proud and jolly; his eyes fill, his soul overflows, and there is a riot of life which takes a large number of lines to quell! That 'little touch of Harry in the night' gives us a flash of Shakspeare in the light.

As he gets older and more perfect in his way of working, either his unconsciousness of self increases or else he grows more cunning in his concealment.

He was a sturdy out-spoken Englishman, too. See the character he draws of Henry VIII.; and hear him plead the cause of Catherine, when thinking that the King's daughter Elizabeth was to be one of the listeners, and knowing that it was her mother who had taken the poor Queen's place whilst it was yet warm with her late presence. He had an eye very keenly alive to the least movement of the national life. When the new map of England is published he takes immediate note of it. Maria, in 'Twelfth Night,' says, 'He does smile his face into more lines than are in the new map with the *augmentation of the Indies.*' And when the two crowns of England and Scotland are united in the person of James, Shakspeare alters the old doggrel,—

'Fi, fo! fum!
I smell the blood of an Englishman,'

into

'I smell the blood of a *British* man.' [1]

for which the Scotch take him closer to heart, and give him an additional hug!

He was undoubtedly monarchical in feeling, and had great loyalty to what we call the Constitution. But he looked more to the joints of the armour of our national life than to any special piece of it. He was a great upholder of the country's honour, and seems to have suspected that the trading classes might not prove the truest bearers of the banner. He may have foreseen the modern tendency to a dry-rot in the commercial spirit. What he thought of the mob we may read in Jack Cade's rising. He treats it rather like Marshal Lobau with his fire-engine. He has especial delight in all the nobilities

[1] His friend the Earl of Southampton had been one of the Commissioners appointed in 1603 for an Union betwixt England and Scotland.

of nature and the personal influence of aristocracy. He may not have been what is called a 'professing' Christian, but he was a most practical one. He had the root of the matter in him. We might apply to him his own description of Benedick—'The man doth fear God, howsoever it *seems* not in him *by some large jests he will make.*'

Coleridge says rightly there is not one really vicious passage in all Shakspeare. There are coarse things, for the customs and language of the time were coarse. But there is nothing rotten at the root, nothing insidious in the suggestion. Vice never walks abroad in the mental twilight wearing the garb of virtue. You hear the voices of Wrong and Right, Truth and Error in his works, but there is no confusion of tongues for the confounding of the sense. He has no softness for sentimental sinners, lets down no drawbridge at the last moment to help them over the dark gulf. His lines are drawn as sharply as the scriptural decree that the tree shall lie where it falls.

He has infinite pity for the suffering and struggling and wounded by the way. The most powerful and pathetic pleadings on behalf of Christian charity out of the New Testament have been spoken by Shakspeare. He takes to his large, warm heart much that the world usually casts out to perish in the cold. There is nothing too poor or too mean to be embraced within the circle of his sympathies. He sees the germ of good in that which looks all evil to the careless passers-by, for his eyes are large with love and have its 'precious seeing.' If there be only the least little redeeming touch in the most abandoned character he is sure to point it out; he recognises the slightest glimpse of the Divine Image in the rudest human clay-cast. If there is one word to be said for some poor, helpless wretch, he urges it to arrest the harsh judgment and waken a kindly thought. If there be but one solitary spark of virtue in the dark heart of the world's worst

outcast, he reveals it with such a sigh of pity as seems to kindle it into larger life. He must have been a good man to have mirrored this round of human life so faithfully and yet so kindly. After all, it is the best hearts that are the truest mirrors even of this world, for it is God's world, bad as we have managed to make it. The worst men give forth an image distorted into the devil's likeness. Shakspeare does not believe that it is the devil's world. In spite of the many sad and sorry sights that we have to look on, with human souls so often weltering in the mire, and Apollyon driving over them with the wheels of his triumphal car, he knows that the devil is not going to win the final victory.

What a large and all-including kindliness of soul he has! His charity is like the sun that smiles on the just and the unjust. His luminous smile falls on the weed as well as the flower, the thistle as well as the palm-tree, the poor hovel as well as the palace-home. It lights the jewels of the hero's crown, and it lets the veriest motes dance in its sunbeams. He does not fly into a passion with stupidity, or ignorance, or pretention. He knows how large a part these play in the natural scheme of things; that they are fathers of families and respectable householders, and get represented in parliament. He looks on many sights which put the little ardent folk out of temper with his calm, slow, wise smile, as though he would say, 'If God can put up with all these queer creatures and ignoramuses, and simulations of human beings in his scheme of creation, there is no reason why I should fume and fret, or denounce them, or *argue* with them. He finds room for them all in his plan; I'll make a place for them in mine.' And no botanist ever culled his rarest specimens more lovingly than Shakspeare his samples of what some might Pharisaically call 'God's own unaccountables.' How he listens to the long-winded garrulousness of the ignorant, whether simple or knowing. Pearls might be dropping from its

lips, or about to drop from them. He does not say let no dog bark, or donkey bray in my presence. Contrariwise, he likes to hear what they have to say for themselves, draws them out, and sometimes fools them to the top of their bent. It is as though he thought Nature had her precious secrets hidden here as elsewhere, and with sufficient patience we should find it all out, if we only watched and waited impartially. See the generous encouragement he gives to Dogberry! How he draws him out, and makes much of him. You would say he was 'enamoured of an ass.' But perhaps the glory of all his large toleration shines out in his treatment of that 'sweet bully' Bottom. Observe how he heaps the choicest gifts and showers the rarest freaks of Fortune around that ass's head. All the wonders of fairy-land are revealed, all that is most exquisitely dainty and sweet in poetry is scattered about his feet. Airy spirits of the most delicate loveliness are his ministers. The Queen of Fairy is in love with him. He is told how beautiful he is in person, how angelic is his voice. And Bottom accepts it all with the most sublime stolidity of conceit. There is a self-possession of ignorance that Shakspeare himself could not upset, although he seems to delight in seeing how far it could go. Nick Bottom has no start of surprise, no misgiving of sensitiveness, no gush of gratitude, no burst of praise. He is as calm in his Ass-head as Jove in his Godhead. Shakspeare knew how often blind Fortune will play the part of Titania, and lavish all her treasures and graces on some poor conceited fool, and feed him with the honey-bag of the bee, and fan him with the wings of butterflies, and light him to bed with glow-worm lamps, and the Ass will still be true to his nature, and require his 'peck of provender.'

If ever old Time had a conqueror in this world, or found a match in mortal mind, it is in William Shakspeare; and it is exceedingly interesting to notice what a sense

our Poet has of the power of his grim antagonist. He appears to watch him at his work, he measures his prowess, he taunts him, and flings hard names at him. Allied to this feeling of Shakspeare's is a profound sense of mortality. Not only has he the natural shrinking of ripe physical life from the cold clutch of the bony skeleton, and the wormy embrace of the grave, but he has been accused of a tendency to consider the secrets of the grave and of decay 'too curiously;' to moralize over a mouldering bone until he is compelled to fling it down with the revulsion of feeling. This is remarkable in so healthy a man. I cannot help coupling with it the fact that Shakspeare was born in the 'year of the plague' at Stratford: he must, therefore, have sucked in a strange influence with his mother's milk—a kind of mysterious sense of death, and danger, and pestilence. And, no doubt, the tales of terror which would be told to the child would create an undefinable horror in his mind—'Things,' as he says, 'that to hear them told have made me tremble.' Besides which, the heap of bones that was piled so high in the charnel-house at Stratford would be sure to draw the boy to look in upon it with a fearful fascination. Some such ghostly memory seems to haunt him at times when he stands near the grave or speaks of the charnel. This reaches its climax in those lines written for his tombstone, which lines were possibly written on account of their local application.

> 'Good friend, for Jesu's sake forbear
> To dig the dust enclosed here:
> Blest be the man that spares these stones,
> And curst be he that moves my bones.'

This, however, which does not amount to a tendency, has been vastly exaggerated by the personal theory of the sonnets. After all, it is Hamlet who discourses in the graveyard, not Shakspeare.

We may also find in our Poet an appalling sense of

the supernatural, the nearness of the spirit world, and its power to break in on the world of flesh when nature prays for help, or darkly conspires to let it in! His working province was the world of human life. His was the 'sphere of humanity;' the real work-a-day world. As a dramatist he had to give that life a palpable embodiment in flesh and blood, and endow it with speech and action. But he knew that human nature was made of spirit as well as flesh, and that it is under the 'skiey influences.' What an illustration of this is the teaching of Romeo's life and death! It is a perfect dramatising of St. Paul's saying, 'the good which I would, I do not! and the evil which I would not, that I do,' When he is the cause of his friend Mercutio's death, he 'thought all for the best;' he meant well, and such is the end of our well-meaning so often!

It seems to me that one great reason why 'Hamlet' will always remain so perplexing a study to those who seek to divine Shakspeare's intentions, is because his characters are so much a part of nature as to include the supernatural; and, in this case, whatsoever 'Hamlet' proposes, Shakspeare shows us it is Fate, as we say, which disposes. It is not Hamlet who finds the solution of his problem of life and death: it is Fate that catches him up in its surer grasp and swifter execution, so that when the final crash comes, Hamlet is one of the most weak and helpless victims in the higher hands. Divine laws override our human wishes. The innocent suffer alike with the guilty, and things do not come about as they were forecast. Thus it is in life! And so it is in Shakspeare. This makes the tragedy. He knew that there was a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we may. He feels that this human life is all very wonderful in its play of passions, its pleasures and its pains, with all their crossings and conflicting lights and shadows, and he does what he can to shed a little light on the vast mystery.

But he feels how small is this little island of our human life, set in the surrounding ocean of eternity, and how limited is the light that he can throw upon it and upon the darkness that hems us in! He knows there is an unfathomable sea where we can find no footing. We must swim if we are to keep up at all. In common with the rest of the universe, we have to repose upon *unseen foundations*. We cannot ignore the spirit-world, and if we do not get help from it, we are pretty sure to get hindrance. For example, in 'Macbeth,' Shakspeare shows us that looking, longing, irresolute mood of mind, which is the Devil's especial delight, because with such he is quite sure of a nibble for his bait. Here we have the perfect type of the wavering, undecided soul that will peer, *very cautiously* of course, over the perilous precipice in such a way, that the Weird Sisters are evoked from the shadowy gulf below, and in such a tempting, balancing attitude, that it is much more easy for the Devil to steal behind and topple the peering spirit over. Nor did he create and people his world of spirits by merely collecting the shreds and patches of tradition, but from the vitalizing life of his own belief; the faith that is an effluent shaping power.

The more we study the works of Shakspeare, the more we shall feel how natural piety made a large part of the cheerful sunshine that smiles out in his philosophy of life. And in great emergencies we may see the flash of a religious feeling large enough for life, and deep enough for death. How frank and bold, for example, is that expression of trust in the Divine when Banquo, encompassed by dangers, exclaims—

'In the great hand of God I stand!'

And when the fatal presentiment, which Shakspeare so often recognises, comes over Hamlet, what does he say? 'Thou knowest not Horatio, how ill all is here about my

heart: *but* there is a special Providence even in the fall of a sparrow.' What a world of meaning there is in the confession of that rogue 'Autolycus'—giving us *his* view of spiritual matters!—'as for the life to come, I sleep out the thought of it.' Frequent and fervent is the appeal to the world hereafter, that is to make the 'odds' of this 'all even,' and to Him who is the 'top of justice,' and his 'eternal justicers.' Reverence, he calls 'that Angel of the world.' How tender, gracious, reverential, grows his language in Hamlet at the mention of our Saviour's birth; enough to show that he had the true flavour of that quaint Elizabethan piety and touching sense of the human personality of our Saviour, which led Dekkar to describe him as the 'first true gentleman that ever breathed,' and old Sylvanus Morgan to give coat armour to 'gentleman Jesus,' as he called him in his 'Sphere of Gentry.'[1]

Let us turn once more to that noble sonnet (146), in which he gives the gay young gallant the solemn address to his soul, and which really is the writer's own comment on the subject, embodying the essence of a thousand sermons in a work only meant for amusement, conveying, at the same time, the loftiest rebuke to those who have insulted the great spirit with their gross sense.

'Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth—
My sinful earth these rebel powers array—
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth;
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?

[1] Morgan, however, is indebted to Dame Juliana Berners for the expression. In her Treatise on Coat Armour she calls the 'gentyl Jesus Cryst' a 'gentleman of his mother's behalf.' According to this authority, 'Seth,' the son of Adam, was a gentleman born, 'through his Father's and Mother's blessing,' which is a departure from the code of the 'Book of Honour' (1590, quarto), wherein a Gentleman means one who has descended from three degrees of Gentry, both on the Father's and Mother's side. Shakspeare has his joke on this subject. There is an allusion in 'King Lear' to a 'Yeoman who has a Gentleman to his son,' almost unintelligible except on personal grounds; and another in the 'Winter's Tale,' where the Clown says he was 'a Gentleman before his father.' It looks as though Shakspeare did

Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?'
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? Is this the body's end?
Then soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more,
So shalt thou feed on Death that feeds on men,
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.'[1]

But, it is not in hints and allusions like these that I would seek for evidence of Shakspeare's religious feeling, or we might multiply them, so much as in his dumb appeal to such feelings as are left vibrating when some great tragedy of his is over. It plainly appears to me that amidst all the storms of life in which humanity may be wrecked, the horror of great darkness in which the powers of evil prevail, the misery and madness and midnight homelessness of poor, witless, white-headed old Lear, with his blindness of trust and broken-heartedness of love, Shakspeare knows right well where there is peace beyond the tempest. Strange glimpses lighten through the rents of ruin. He sees the waves roll on, and life buffeted and tossed with the turmoil, and all the agony of sinking hearts and outstretched hands; but he also sees the unmoving Eternity, and the 'so long impossible' rest. He knows well enough where the compensations lie for the great dumb love of Cordelia, which could not get expression in life. He knew of all the love in the hearts of father and child, which would take an eternity to fully unfold; and where could he pillow it with more infinite suggestiveness than beside the grave? It is for us to see

refer to his being a Gentleman on the Mother's side, whereas his Father was only a Franklin. Very possibly this was a standing joke in the Shakspeare family.

[1] 'Neither can they die any more. For Death, the last enemy, is destroyed.'

what is dimly visible through that dark window of the other world! He has said his say—let the rest be told in silence! And the soul must be dull indeed whose sight has not been purged and feeling purified for the loftier vision on the spiritual stage. Our interest does not cease when the drama is ended. 'To be continued' is plainly written at the close of its fifth act. The heart-ache which he has given us demands and draws the other world near for very pity and comfort. You cannot help looking up from amid the shadows of the dark valley to where the light is breaking overhead, and feel a touch of those immortal relationships which live beyond the human. Let no one suppose that Shakspeare's genius, being of such stature as it was, could not rise up and 'take the morning' that lies beyond this night of time where bewildered souls so often get beclouded. The fixed calm of his eye, and the patient smile almost hovering about his lips, with which he is able to contemplate the workings of error and evil, and the victories of adverse fate, imply his trust in that revelation which has called in the New World of Christianity to redress the wrong measures and false balances of the Old. Thus all the action of his tragedy, though confined to human life and this round of time, has a reacting and enriching influence from the touch of other worlds. The sea of life and its tides of passion, moved to the depths, do not merely throw two dead bodies on the shore; there are also souls at rest, with a radiance on the ripple such as makes the dark deeps beautiful. All this is natural result. It was not Shakspeare's place as a writer of tragedy to frighten us and then say something for our comfort. He points no moral, winds up with no sermon. It is his work to create interest, to quicken sympathy and enlarge life; the rest follows. He knew how much Nature will work for her favourites, and he was her own best favourite, so he has only to set her well at work and

quietly steal away, leaving Nature to finish. In this respect his negative power is as great and surprising as the positive capacity: what he does not do is often as remarkable and effective as what he does!

Great tragedy works some of its deepest effects dumbly. It gives us a more significant version of that sentiment—

> 'Silence in love bewrays more woe
> Than words tho' ne'er so witty;
> A beggar that is dumb, you know,
> May challenge double pity.'

So is it with the final appeal of Shakspeare's; and though it leaves you gazing with streaming eyes on those two dead lovers in the dim vault at Verona, yet has he succeeded in creating such a swelling spirit within you, put such a breath of the eternal into your sad sigh that the soul mounts into majesty and reigns and rules high above the region of storms, where the spirits of those immortal lovers shall live their married life and part no more.

He was indeed the 'priest to all time of the wonder and bloom of the world which he saw with his eyes and was glad.' By all the forces of inner nature and outer circumstance he was broadened to embrace human life rather than narrowed to strike up keenly into the region of abstract speculation. The fruit himself of a ripe time, in him general humanity reaches its ripeness. 'Ripeness is all,' he says, in 'Lear,' and in a sense this ripeness was all to him; he leaves the fruit where it falls. But, he knew, none better, that the ripeness contained the seed of life hereafter; and 'ripeness' with him means *readiness*. He was the very spirit of the sense personified, but no positive philosopher who is put out by a Providence —the incalculable force that for ever expands dead law with breathing life! And he always makes room for this in his dramatic arrangements; catches the awful

whisper of the Infinite; is conscious of its weird watching eyes, and its horizon of mystery. If we cannot get at the Man Shakspeare then, we can get at the Philosopher, and this was just the most natural of philosophers; the spirit of the man shines through all his philosophy. It is a folly to talk about the little we know of Shakspeare, when with a vitalizing spirit of research we might learn so much!

It is pleasant to think of our great Poet so amply reaping the fruits of his industry and prudence early in life, and spending his calm latter days in the old home of his boyhood which he had left a-foot and come back to in the saddle. The date of his retirement from London cannot be determined. I am decidedly of opinion that it was before the publication of the sonnets, in 1609, and other circumstances seem to indicate that he was living at Stratford, in 1608, in the August of which year he sued Addenbroke; on the 6th of September, his Mother was buried; and, on the 16th of October, he was sponsor at the baptism of Henry Walker's son. Here, again, the Southampton letter agrees exactly with the other evidence in pointing out the year 1608 as the time at which the Poet finally ceased to be an actor.

He had the feeling, inexpressibly strong with Englishmen, for owning a bit of this dear land of ours and living in one's own house; paying rent to no man. We know how he clung to his native place all through his London life, strengthening his rootage there all the while. We learn how he went back once a year to the field-flowers of his childhood to hear in the leaves the whispers of Long-Ago and 'get some green'—as Chaucer says—where the overflowing treasure of youth had, dew-like, given its glory to the grass, its freshness to the flower, and climb the hills up which the boy had run, and loiter along the lanes where he had courted his wife as they two went slowly on the way to Shottery, and the boy

thought Anne Hathaway very fair whilst lingering in the tender twilight, and the honeysuckles smelled sweet in the dusk, and the star of love shone and shook with tremulous splendour, and Willie's arm was round her, and in their eyes would glisten the dews of that most balmy time.

We might fancy, too, that on the stage, when he was playing some comparatively silent part, his heart would steal away and the audience melt from before his face, as he wandered back to where the reeds were sighing by Avon stream, and the Nightingale was singing in the Wier-brake just below Stratford Church, and the fond fatherly heart took another look at the grave of little Hamnet—patting it, as it were, with an affectionate '*Come to you, little one, by and by*,' and the play was like an unsubstantial pageant faded in the presence of that scenery of his soul.

Only we know what a practical fellow he was, and if any such thought came into his mind it would be put back with a 'lie thou there, Sweetheart,' and he would have addressed himself more sturdily than ever to the business in hand.

At last he had come back to live and write; die and be buried at home. He had returned to the old place laden with honours and bearing his sheaves with him; wearing the crown invisible to most of his neighbours, but having also such possessions as they could appreciate. They looked up to him now, for the son of poor John Shakspeare, the despised deer-stealer and player, had become a most respectable man, able to spend 500*l.* or so a year amongst them. He could sit under his own vine, and watch the ongoings of country life whilst waiting for the sunset of his own; nestle in the bosom of his own family, walk forth in his own fields, plant his mulberry-tree, compose several of his noblest dramas, and ripen for his rest in the place where he had climbed for birds'-nests, and, as they say, poached for deer by moon-

light. I think he must have enjoyed it all vastly. He entered into local plans, and astonished his fellow-townsmen by his business habits. And they would like him too, if only because he was so practical by habit, so English in feeling. We know that he fought on their side in resisting an encroachment upon Welcomb Common. He 'could not bear the enclosing of Welcomb,' he said. We feel, however, that as he moved amongst these honest, unsuspecting folk, with so grave and douce a face, he must have had internal ticklings at times, and quite enough to do to keep quiet those sprites of mirth and mischief lurking in the corners of his mouth and in the twinkle of his eyes as he thought how much capital he had made out of them, and how he had taken their traits of character to market, and turned them into the very money to which his fellow-townsmen were so respectful now.

The few facts that we get of Shakspeare's life at Stratford are very homely, and one or two of his footprints there are very earthy; but they tell us it was the foot of a sturdy, upright, matter-of-fact Englishman, such as will find a firm standing-place even in the dirt, and it corresponds to the bust in the Church at Stratford. Both represent, though coarsely, that yeoman side of his nature which would be most visible in his everyday dealings with men. For example, we learn that in August, 1608, he brought an action against John Addenbroke for the recovery of a debt. The verdict was in his favour, but the defendant had no effects. Shakspeare then proceeded against Thomas Horneby, who had been bail for Addenbroke. We cannot judge of the humanity of the case. The law says the Poet was right. But, by this we may infer that Shakspeare had learned to look on the world in too practical a way to stand any nonsense. He would be abused, no doubt, for making anybody cash up that owed him money. There would be people who had come to

argue that a player had no prescriptive or natural right to be prudent and thrifty, or exact in money transactions. Shakspeare thought differently. He had to deal with many coarse and pitiful facts of human life; and this he had learned to do in a strong, effectual way. There would be a good deal of coarse, honest prose even in Shakspeare, but no sham poetry of false sentimentality. What he had made up his mind to do, he would do thoroughly. He was a man of business, and why should he not apply their own laws to the Medes and Persians of money?

We get a fact curiously illustrative of Shakspeare's domestic life from the Chamberlain's accounts of the year 1614:—

'Item, for one quart of sack, and one quart of clarett winne, given to a preacher at the New Place, XX*d*.'

It has been suggested, that the Poet may have lent his house for the occasion, as he himself could have had little sympathy with a Puritan preacher. But it would be very ungracious, not to say unfair, to suppose that Shakspeare lent his house for the entertainment, and took himself off whilst the wine was drinking. This entry affords a most interesting subject for conjecture. If we take it in another aspect, is it not strange that the Puritan preacher should have been located at the house of a player and playwright? For this, I think, is one of the earliest, if not the first, instances of such an entry. Possibly the connexion was through Shakspeare's daughter, Susanna, who may have lived at New Place. Her epitaph tells of her being 'wise to salvation,' and a good Christian. I do not suppose that the Poet took much personal interest in the matter, doctrinally. He was not the man to be lightly caught up and his wits set waltzing by every or any circling cyclone that might gyrate over a small tract of the national mind. But he was the kindly Christian to open his house to a man

whom others of his local standing might feel shy of. It is my belief however, that Shakspeare entertained the preacher just for the fun of the thing; a great part of the fun being the serious interest shown by his good daughter, the best of it all being Susanna's consternation when the Poet had drawn out the old Adam of the Preacher's carnal man, with his own chirruping canary wine, and charming talk, and roguish twinkle of wit, and she was called upon to lend a hand in helping to gather up the fragments of her broken idol, by getting him off to bed. For it is my settled conviction, that those two quarts of wine and sack were not the only ones drank in 'New Place,' that night. If that Puritan were not one of the sourest-blooded then going, we may conclude that he ripened in the sunny presence of his host; and the godly man never knew how much wine he had taken, if the Corporation knew what they had to pay for. Shakspeare must have had the very soul of hospitality. He kept open house and open heart for troops of friends, and loved to enfranchise and set flying the 'dear prisoned spirits of the impassioned grape;' many a time was his broad silver and gilt bowl set steaming; his smile of welcome beamed like the sun through mist; his large heart welled with humanity, and overflowed with good fellowship; his talk brightened the social circle with ripple after ripple of radiant humour. And who can doubt that he was 'at home' to a friend of Mistress Hall; sat in his own seat, and presided at his own board and bowl?

The tradition runs, that he caught his death through leaving his bed when ill, because some of his old friends and playfellows had called upon him for a carouse. He was quite unselfish enough for that; also too wise. The probability is that he died very suddenly of a fever.

And what was this man like in person when he walked our world? Thackeray has said that he would have liked to have blacked Shakspeare's shoes, just to have looked

up into his face. We would give a great deal for a genuine *carte* of his visit here! Next to looking on the face of him who spake 'as never man spake,' one would like to have seen the living lineaments of him who wrote as never man wrote; who contained such huge intellectual forces, and vast possibilities of being; so prodigal a fulness of life, and so Protean a plasticity of power, that he could body forth in his works, characters enough to people a world, and render a fair representation of our race: the man who made the Map of Humanity—he whose nature contained the awful rage of such a tempest of power as that in which the reason of old Lear is wrecked, on such a night of storm—the pathos of Lear's poor loveable, fond Fool—the grace of Ariel, and grotesqueness of Caliban—the chivalry of Henry V., the wit of Mercutio, the sweetbriar pungency of pretty peerless Perdita—and all those 'gracious silences,' and low-voiced loveable women, few of whom we shall meet upon our pilgrimage here, but which will be preserved, we may well imagine, as patterns to be copied from in other lives to come, and yet untrodden worlds, with the chance of our meeting them hereafter! What a life it must have been, when all his characters only reveal something of it in shadowy imagery, the pictures on the walls! What a Spirit! When the '*Works of Shakspeare*' are but the leafage and bloom it shed during its season of time on earth! if such be the foliage and bloom that have fallen from it, what must the fruit be that still ripens on for eternity?

I take it that the Droeshout Etching roughly gives us the Poet in his mid-manhood, and the Stratford Bust the grander man, who created Lady Macbeth, Lear, Timon, Othello, and Prospero, but smacking more of the jollity of his country life. Mr. Dyce observes that the Bust exhibits the Poet in the act of composition, and enjoying, as it were, the richness of his own conceptions.

A happy remark in illustration of Shakspeare's smile

was made by R. B. Haydon in a note of his, written June 13th, 1828, in the album kept at Stratford Church. Speaking of the bust, he says, 'The forehead is fine as Raphael's or Bacon's, and the form of the nose and exquisite refinement of the mouth, with its amiable, genial hilarity of wit and good nature, so characteristic, *unideal*, bearing truth in every curve, with a *little bit of the teeth showing at the moment of smiling, which must have been often seen by those who had the happiness to know Shakspeare, and must have been pointed out to the sculptor as necessary to likeness when he was dead.*'[1]

These two, the etching and bust, are sufficient for us to re-create our Shakspeare as a man of sturdy build, with a royal head and large lineaments. The hair of a warm brown, and the beard somewhat more golden; a man, not made out of cheeseparings and heeltaps, but full of ripe life and cordial spirits and concentrated energy; with eyes to be felt by those whom they looked on; such eyes as see most things without the head turning about; a full mouth, frank and brave, and richly humorous, capable of giving free utterance to the laugh that would ring out of the manly chest with all his heart in it. But there are lines in the face, and the forehead is not quite so smooth as we have been accustomed to see in his portraits; the hair is waxing thinner; the beard growing grizzled. It is a face that would look weather-beaten in the country, and dusky in London; being something coarse in the grain. Not without bodily waste have the wear of life and work, and the touch of time, shaped out the statue of such a mighty soul! And, on the whole, we imagine that had it been possible to have met our Poet in the streets of Stratford, and looked on him as he lived, aged about fifty, we should have been disappointed with his general appearance. To us he is all immortal now; and we should be looking for the halo, the garland, and the singing-robes

[1] *Shakspeare Society's Papers*, vol. ii. p. 10.

about him, but we should find a man who wore good sound boots on his feet—not sandals—and a hat pulled rather tightly down over his magnificent brow. He would not hold the lyre in his hand, and no wings would have sprung at his shoulders. He might be carrying samples of corn, and meditating the price current, or congratulating himself on having sold his shares before the Globe Theatre was burned down. We must have attained a most uncommon mastery of the sordid and fleshly facts of human existence before we could possibly recognise our Poet. If told that this was the man, he would not be *our* Shakspeare. *Him* we should still have to seek in his works.

His sudden death after so recent a record of his 'perfect health,' is quite in keeping with our idea of the man Shakspeare, who was the very image of Life incarnate. Such a death best embodies such an immortal spirit of life; gives the finishing touch, and leaves us an image in the mortal sphere, almost as consummate and undecaying as is the shape of immortality put on by him in the realm of Mind. He went with his powers full-summed; his faculties in full lustre; his fires unquenched, his sympathies unsubdued. There was no returning tide of an ebbing manhood, but the great ocean of his life, that had gathered its wealth from a thousand springs, rose to the perfect height, touched the complete circle, and in its spacious fulness was still.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX A.

CUPID'S BRAND: TWO ODD SONNETS.

THESE two fragments or exercises have no necessary relation to either of the series of sonnets written for the Earl of Southampton and William Herbert. I only include them in my work, for the sake of making my reprint of Shakspeare's Sonnets complete. These essays prove that the Poet had nothing to do with making up the collection for the Press. He would not have published a double treatment of one idea like this; it could have no meaning, save to show his cleverness. They, together with the 'Lover's Lament,' also prove that extraneous things were gathered into Thorpe's Book, by William Herbert.

Cupid laid by his brand and fell asleep,
A maid of Dian's this advantage found,
And his love-kindling fire did quickly steep
In a cold valley-fountain of that ground,
Which borrowed from this holy fire of love
A dateless-lively heat, still to endure,
And grew a seething bath which yet men prove
Against strange maladies a sovereign cure:
But at my Mistress' eyes Love's brand new-fired,
The Boy for trial needs would touch my breast;
I, sick withal, the help o' the bath desired,
And thither hied a sad distempered guest,
But found no cure: The bath for my help lies
Where Cupid got new fire—my Mistress' eyes.

(153.)

The little Love-God lying once asleep,
Laid by his side his heart-inflaming brand,
Whilst many nymphs that vowed chaste lives to keep,
Came tripping by; but in her maiden-hand
The fairest votary took up that fire
Which many legions of true hearts had warmed,
And so the General of hot desire
Was, sleeping, by a virgin hand disarmed:
This brand she quenchéd in a cool well by,
Which from Love's fire took heat perpetual,
Growing a bath and healthful remedy
For men diseased: but I, my Mistress' thrall,
Came there for cure, and this by that I prove—
Love's fire heats water, water cools not love.

(154.)

APPENDIX B.

DRAYTON AND SHAKSPEARE.

It is understood that we have no contemporary notice of the sonnets in MS., other than that of Meres. I cannot, however, get rid of the idea that Drayton makes a remarkable allusion to them in some lines of his Epistle on 'Poets and Poesy.' He has spoken of Shakspeare by name as a Comedian in whom the player predominates; considers him as good a Poet in the smooth comic vein, as any that had trafficked with the stage in his time; reserving his fire for Marlowe and Ben Jonson. Later on in the poem are these remarkable lines!

> 'For such whose poems be they *ne'er so rare,*
> In *private chambers* that *encloistered* are,
> And *by transcription daintily must go*
> As tho' *the world unworthy were to know*
> *Their rich composures,* let those men who keep
> These *wondrous relics* in their judgement deep,
> And *cry them up so* let such pieces be
> Spoke of by those that shall come after me.'

Questionless Shakspeare's sonnets were not the only poetry then handed about in MS. amongst private friends, and spoken of as being rich as it was rare. Still there is something very special in this description. It does not apply to any known poetry of the kind, nor hit the exact circumstantial conditions, as it does to the sonnets of

Shakspeare. We have nothing of the sort identified as the sonnets are by the mention of Meres. In truth the lines seem to reply to Meres as consciously as does the title in Thorpe's Book. Here are the 'rare poems' for 'sugred sonnets,' the 'private chambers' for 'private friends,' the friends who keep the sonnets, for the friends among whom Shakspeare's sonnets are, and the men who *cry up these relics in their judgement deep!* The critic Meres for example. There is a feeling of annoyance expressed, a sneer at the poetry that is too rare for the common light of day, but must go daintily in delicate handwriting, be kept encloistered in a sumptuous privacy, read by the coloured light of friendship, and exalted so to those on the outside who are not permitted to judge if the report be true. All this is far too explicit to be general, and must have had a particular aim. It smacks of a personal pique. And the author of these lines, we infer, had some such feeling towards Shakspeare, or there was a coolness between them, from the fact that Drayton printed an eulogy of Shakspeare, as the Poet of Lucrece, in his 'Matilda the Fair and Chaste Daughter of Lord Robert Fitzwater,' which complimentary reference to

> 'Lucrece, of whom proud Rome hath boasted long,
> Lately revived to live another age!'

was allowed to stand in the second edition of the poem (1596), but was omitted from all subsequent editions. What was the cause we know not. It may be that the Poet was piqued at Shakspeare's not reciprocating his praise. Whatever it was, some slight ill-feeling underlay the act of Drayton, and if these lines do apply to Shakspeare's Sonnets the expression is most apposite under the circumstances.

Mr. Collier states that the Epistle appeared in print for the first time in the year 1627, but that affords no clue to the date at which it was written. Drayton had been pub-

lishing little; he did not print anything betwixt his 'Legend of Great Cromwell' (1607) and his 'Poly-olbion (1613-22), as his poetry had no great success. It may be that the publication of the sonnets in 1609 was one cause why these lines were so long kept back. It was a private Epistle, and the great probability is that some lines of it, early written, were afterwards added to when the poem was published. I am unable to persuade myself that the lines quoted do not refer to Shakspeare's Sonnets in MS., or that they were not written during the earlier period of Shakspeare's career. Surely it would have been too absurd on the part of Michael Drayton, who had the Poet's rage but mildly, to have merely praised Shakspeare for his '*smooth comic vein*' if the lines had been composed after 'Othello,' 'Lear,' and 'Macbeth' had been produced! Shakspeare unquestionably borrowed from Drayton's 'Nymphidia' to set forth his 'Queen Mab,' and enrich his fairy world of the 'Midsummer Night's Dream.' Possibly Drayton resented this.

It has been held difficult to determine which was the borrower in another instance. In his poem of the 'Barons' Wars' (1603), Drayton has these lines—

> 'Such one he was (of him we boldly say)
> In whose rich soul all sovereign powers did suit,
> In whom in peace the elements all lay
> So mixt as none could sovereignty impute,
> As all did govern yet all did obey:
> His lively temper was so absolute,
> That it seemed, when Heaven his model first began,
> In him it showed perfection in a Man!'

Everyone remembers Antony's description of Brutus:—

> 'This was the noblest Roman of them all!
> His life was gentle: and the elements
> So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world "*This was a Man.*"'

This looks remarkably like one of Shakspeare's cases of compression; his stamp on another man's material.

I do not think 'Julius Cæsar' was written before 1608-9, after 'Antony and Cleopatra,' and my impression is that it was followed by 'Coriolanus' about 1611. One reason being that in the latter play Shakspeare replies to Davies' lines, which appear not to have been published before 1610 or 1611. Be this as it may, it is noticeable that in a later edition of his poem (1619) Drayton has returned to his description, and retouched it into a still nearer likeness to that of Shakspeare. The last two lines are altered thus:—

> 'As that it seemed when *Nature* him began,
> *She meant to show* all that might be in man.'

It certainly has every appearance of Drayton's lines having been first written, and of his returning to them, after Shakspeare had taken the thought to reclaim his own, improved by the added touch of the greater Poet, only there is at least one more fact in the case to be taken into account.

In 'Hamlet' Shakspeare had first of all written of the Prince's dead father—

> 'A combination and a form indeed,
> Where every god did seem to set his seal,
> To give the world assurance of a Man.'

Thus the first appearance of the thought is, so far as the evidence goes, in Shakspeare's work, but the after-contention for it is curious.

APPENDIX C.

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S FAVOURITES.

Two of the persons with whom my Theory is concerned having been spoken of in this work as Favourites Apparent to Queen Elizabeth, I should like to ask, for the sake of information, what we are to understand by the term 'Favourite?' What in the minds of our modern Elizabethans does it mean? What was that relationship to Elizabeth with the one name and so many persons, including Leicester, Hatton, Raleigh, Essex, Southampton, Herbert, Carey and others?

'I have learnt,' says De Quadra, the Spanish Ambassador, writing in 1559, according to Mr. Froude, 'I have learnt also certain other things as to the terms on which the Queen and Lord Robert stand toward each other, which I could not have believed.' These terms are written in the next year to the Duchess of Parma thus:—'The Lord Robert hath made himself master of the business of the state and the person of the Queen;' and again he says, 'this woman is likely to go to sleep in the palace and wake with her Lover in the Tower.'

In allusion to the current talk on the subject of the Dudley amour De Quadra also reports that the Queen said she 'was afraid the Archduke Charles might take

advantage of the scandal which could not fail to reach his ears on his arrival in England, and should he not marry her (in consequence) her honour might suffer.' Should not innocence have remained proudly silent? Why should her Majesty have met scandal one half-way if she had not previously advanced the other half?

Then, there is the letter of expostulation and advice, addressed to Sir Christopher Hatton (Harln. MSS. 787. f.88) by Sir Edward Dyer, printed in Davison's Poetical Rhapsody, by Nicholas Harris Nicolas (1826). In the year 1572 the dancing Chancellor had incurred the Queen's displeasure, and this letter of Dyer's reads as though it were a persuasion for Hatton not to follow a course privately spoken of, and he uses these extraordinary words: '*Though she do descend very much in her sex as a woman, yet we may not forget her place, and the nature of it*;' and '*For though in the beginning when her Majesty sought you (after her good manner) she did bear with rugged dealing of yours, until she had what she fancied, yet now, after satiety and fulness, it (such mode of action as Hatton had contemplated) will rather hurt than help you.*' If this letter be genuine my question regarding the meaning of the word 'Favourite' is answered. But, is it a forgery? Sir Edward Dyer appears to have been looked up to by the Royal Favourites at times as a Mentor in certain private matters pertaining to the Court. He had himself hovered on the borderland, and once caught a glimpse of the Delectable Mountains of Favouritism. Curiously enough Essex writes to him when in a like fix and with a similar feeling to Hatton—if Hatton really wrote the letter which Dyer is presumed to answer. Essex writes to Dyer July 31st, 1587. Two months before, he was first in favour; Mr. Anthony Bagot writing to his father in May of the same year, says:—'When she (the Queen) is abroad, nobody near her but my Lord of Essex; and at night my Lord is at cards, or one game or another with her,

that he cometh not to his own lodging till birds sing in the morning.'[1] But now he has had a quarrel with the Queen and is starting off for the siege of Sluys.

Essex tells Dyer that he has been 'this morning at Winchester House' to seek him, and he continues, '*I would have given a thousand pounds to have had one hour's speech with you; so much I would hearken to your counsel*, and so greatly do I esteem your friendship.'[2]

The cause of quarrel is the Earl's rivalry with Raleigh in Elizabeth's favour. And Essex says, 'I did let her know whether I had cause to disdain his *competition of love*, or whether I could have comfort *to give myself over to the service of a Mistress* that was in awe of such a man!'

What can Rowland White have aimed at in his letter of October 1st, 1595, when he writes

'My Lord of Essex kept his bed all yesterday. His favour continues *quam diu se bene gesserit.* Yet my Lord of Southampton is a careful waiter here, and *sede vacante*, doth receive favours at her Majesty's hands; all this without breach of amity between them?'

One would also like to know what was the precise meaning of Fulke Greville's proposition to make Southampton the *Favourite* in place of Essex, as related by Wotton?

And what are we to understand from certain hints of Rowland White, such as these:—

'It is muttered that young Sir Hen. Carey stands to be a *Favourite*; that his lady mother and my Lady Hunsdon do *further it* and *grace it.*'

'Now that my Lord Herbert is gone he is very much blamed for his cold and weak manner of pursuing her Majesty's favour. Young Carey follows it with more care, and boldness. Some jealousy I had that you were sent away because you should not be here to advise and

[1] *Blithfield MSS.* [2] *Bodleian. Tanner MSS.* 76. 46.

counsel him (Herbert) in a matter of such greatness; for surely it would be to your good to *see him a Favourite.*' Again, we read in the Life of Edward Herbert, Lord Cherbury, that when he first appeared at Court, he was kneeling with the rest in the presence chamber, as the Queen passed by to the Chapel at Whitehall, and, seeing him, her Majesty stopped to ask who he was. On being told that he was married, she, swearing her ordinary oath, said, 'It is a pity he was married so young,' and thereupon gave him her hand to kiss twice, both times clapping him on the cheek. Various such illustrations of character and conduct call to mind the coarse charge of Cardinal Allen, in his 'Admonition to the people of England,' which states that the Queen 'made her Court as a trap to entangle in sin, and overthrow the *younger sort* of the nobility and gentry of the land,' and make one wonder more and more what feeling it was that stirred the virgin breast so strongly toward the comely young courtiers, to the marriage of whom she had such insuperable objections.

It does not in the least help to fathom the secret of this Favouriteship, through which Hatton, Leicester, and Essex passed; for which Southampton was proposed, and to which honour Herbert might have aspired if he would, but was out-distanced by 'young Carey,' to point to the age of the Queen and the youth of the young nobles. Many aged persons have had extremely youthful tastes. It was a characteristic of the Tudor tooth. Besides the Queen prided herself on not looking or growing old as other women did. And according to unsuspected contemporary testimony, she must have borne her years very youthfully. Jacob Rathgeb, who wrote the story of Duke Frederick of Wirtemburgh, in 'England as seen by Foreigners,' saw her Majesty in her 59th year, and, thinking she was 67 at the time, he records that, although she had borne the heavy burthen of ruling a kingdom

for 34 years, she need not indeed—to judge both from her person and appearance—yield much to a young girl of sixteen!

My chief interest at present in the subject mooted, is in relation to the Earl of Southampton and Elizabeth Vernon, and her Majesty's persistent opposition to their marriage. This led me to note other curious circumstances. Will some devout Elizabethan help me out of my doubt and difficulty? Will Mr. Kingsley, who, in his paper on Raleigh, vouches with so much certitude for the Queen's virtue? Perhaps Mr. Froude will produce a satisfactory explanation? Meantime I am at liberty to maintain that it is not necessary to possess a monkish imagination not to be able to chime in with Fuller's emphatic cry of '*Virginissima*,' where he calls Elizabeth *when living*, the first Maid on Earth, and *when dead*, the second in heaven.

APPENDIX D.

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

THIS drama has been ascribed to the pen of Shakspeare on the authority of Meres and the first folio; all the other evidence tends to show that Meres made a mistake which was afterwards repeated.

I cannot imagine how anyone who has intimately felt the soul of Shakspeare can possibly countenance such a mistake. For the play has none of the Shakspearian condensation of thought which, in his earliest work, is loosed in the most utter sweetnesses and felicities of expression. None of the Shakspearian gusto of language which makes many of his cordial words as it were the audible kiss of sound and sense. None of the Shakspearian 'flowing continuity of interchangeable pauses:' there is nothing of the vital glow or 'natural ruby' of the Shakspearian life, and can be none of the usual signs of its presence. In the whole play, there is no single touch that his closest acquaintances instantly and for ever recognise as the master's; not one of those nearnesses to nature that we know as Shakspearian; and yet he could not write thirty lines without emitting an authentic flash of such revelation.

In short, those who accept 'Titus Andronicus' as Shakspeare's work cannot only not have followed out his nearness to nature in the more delicate touches and opal-

escent graces of his poetry, but they totally misapprehend the quality of his coarseness; the signs of his immaturity. 'Pericles' is an early play. Dryden calls it the earliest, and I see no cause for doubting the tradition, but many reasons for accepting it. And this play contains the unmistakeable Shakspearian touch of life, of prompt and pregnant thought, of phrase that glows like the serene fire in a gem. But it is impossible to find any proof of Shakspeare's presence from beginning to end of the 'Titus Andronicus.'

Shakspeare's is the tragedy of Terror; this is the tragedy of Horror. His tragedy is never bloodily sensual; his genius has ever a spiritualising influence. Blood may flow, but he is dealing with more than blood. This play is a perfect slaughter-house, and the blood makes appeal to all the senses. The murder is committed in the very gateways of the sense. It reeks blood, it smells of blood, we almost feel that we have handled blood; it is so gross. The mental stain is not whitened by Shakspeare's sweet springs of pity; the horror is not hallowed by that appalling sublimity with which he invested his chosen ministers of death. It is tragedy only in the coarsest material relationships; the tragedy of Horror.

Mr. Knight whose views on the subject of our poet's earliest work, compel his arguments to straddle over impossible spaces past all power of standing, endeavours to show that this play was written by Shakspeare in some period of 'storm and stress' when he was in the throes and agonies of labouring might too big for birth, and had not yet attained to his repose of power.

Yet, directly after, he remarks that from the first, Shakspeare, 'with that consummate judgment which gave fitness to everything he did or proposed to do, held his genius in subjection to the apprehension of the people till he felt secure of their capability to appreciate the highest excellence.' But this equally implies his power to stand

over his work and hold his genius in such subjection as should effectually prevent its breaking out in the wild way it must have done supposing him to be the author of 'Titus Andronicus.' It is demonstrable however that Shakspeare did not pass through any such period of agitation or mental green-sickness. His work is healthy from the first. He makes no absurd endeavours to embrace immensity; had no assumptions of strength that collapse in spasm. No tearing of things to pieces tooth and nail. No blind haste or threatening rant. But everywhere the ease, the depth, the fulness, the poise of a rich genius flowering in joy, whose power was from the visible beginning supreme in its range and according to its theme.

We shall best apprehend the superb and happy health of the man by entering into the *humour* of his 'Venus and Adonis.' His merry motive all through is to tantalize the passion with which he plays so provokingly. And this he does with the large ease, the sure touch, the ripe humour of human nature's great master. The man who could so early take such an attitude of assured sovereignty could not have afterwards become the fretting fuming slave of 'Storm and Stress.' Besides which we may learn from the Marlowe group of Sonnets that as early as 1592 or 1593 Shakspeare was fully conscious of the gross faults and defects, the surfeiting comparisons, the Brobdignagian bombast that Marlowe and others revelled in, who, as Nash told them, would 'embowel the clouds in a speech of comparison; thinking themselves more than initiated in Poets' immortality if they but once get Boreas by the beard and the Heavenly Bull by the dewlap.' Shakspeare assures us that he does not do this, and in spite of the handsome way in which he spoke of his rival, his finer ear and truer taste must have detected a good deal of bombast in the mighty line. He would see that the glow of Marlowe's imagination had in it a swarthy smoke, so that the poetry never attained the true *regulus*

of colour, but came forth from the furnace as bronze, not having the mellow splendour of pure gold. He knew well enough that Marlowe had not quite found the way to the noble in poetry, and that he strove all the harder to reach the grim heights where frowns the terrible.

One of the greatest differences betwixt Shakspeare and Marlowe was that the latter poet had not sufficient humour to hinder his taking the step from the sublime to the ridiculous, whereas Shakspeare had a most active and ticklish sense of the absurd. This must have been one of his quickest, keenest, most self-preserving instincts! — the liveliest part of his self-consciousness. This alone would have prevented his following in the track of Marlowe save for the purpose of sketching on the back of the other poet as it were, a portrait in caricature of his more prominent features—making a face for the fun of the thing, such as setting Pistol to parody Tamburlane, and devoting some of his earliest merriest satire to mock those who talked unlike men of God's making. And yet Shakspeare is supposed to have written or re-written a drama which contains many of Marlowe's worst characteristics, the unnatural spirit of which is far worse than anything in the expression.

Had this play been our Poet's it could not have been very early work. It is assumed to have been produced as a new Play at Henslowe's Theatre on the 23rd of January 1593. This however is a mistake. 'Titus Andronicus' was not produced until January 23rd 1594.

At page 31 of the Diary Henslowe begins his dates with the 27th of December 1593, and continues with that year up to December 31st. Next day January 1st should be dated 1594 or 159$\frac{3}{4}$, their New Year's day being March 25th. But the year has been left unchanged, and it continues unchanged up to April 6th in the entry appertaining to the Duke of Sussex's men and the Queen's men, who were then playing together, or else Henslowe

lumped his receipts together having a share in both. April 6th is dated 1593 and the following night, April 7th is dated 1594, for the first time in that year the rectification of the dating is made. So that from January 1st to April 7th the year according to our reckoning, is dated wrongly. *During this time 'Titus Andronicus' was produced as a new play on the 22nd of January* 1593 as dated, which means January 22nd 1594. This makes it still more improbable that it *was* Shakspeare's Tragedy.

Malone supposes the play brought out at Henslowe's Theatre to be the same as that included in Shakspeare's Works as 'Titus Andronicus.' No doubt the play is the same but it is simply inconceivable that it should have been a new work of our Poet's brought out at a rival theatre in 1594. The play was probably founded on the older 'Titus and Vespasian' of the same theatre but, as Hallam judges, it is not Shakspeare's in any sense. It seems to me that Ben Jonson's sneer at it is good evidence that the play of which he speaks was not Shakspeare's. Also, he may have classed it with the old 'Jeronimo' on account of its quality without implying that both were of the same date. My conviction is that the play was mapped out and partly written by Marlowe who was the great poet at Henslowe's Theatre. His 'Jew of Malta,' and the 'Titus Andronicus' were running there alternately and to judge by Henslowe's receipts the latter play was a success. Marlowe's death in June 1593 would prevent his finishing the play and be the chief cause why his name slipped out of sight. It was entered in the Stationers' Registers 1593 but not completed for performance till early in the next year. And whose was the hand that finished the play? Whose should it be but Nash's? he who was united with Marlowe in the production of 'Queen Dido.' It appears to me that no great amount of insight is necessary to discover the same workmanship in both plays. The Drama may have been removed to

Shakspeare's Theatre on account of Nash's part in it and because both Nash and Marlowe were under the patronage of Shakspeare's friend, Southampton, in whose interest the play may have been completed and at whose request it may have been adopted by the Blackfriars Company. It was published without a name in 1594. And if our Poet made a copy in his own hand-writing that may have misled the Editors of the first folio. As for Meres, it is far easier to believe that he made one mistake in his list of an unpublished literature than it is to accept 'Titus Andronicus' as Shakspeare's work in any sense.

APPENDIX E.

'EYSELL.'

SONNET 111.

'EYSELL' is Vinegar, says Steevens, and he quotes a colourable illustration from 'A mery Geste of the Frere and the Boye.'

> 'God that dyed for us all
> And drank both eysell and gall.'

Vinegar, says Malone, is esteemed very efficacious in preventing the communication of the plague and other contagious distempers, which is quite true and yet not applicable; for the lover in the sonnet has no contagious distemper, his infection was not physical, he did not require to be fumigated; his stomach was not literally a sick chamber; and our Social Science, as yet, has failed to show that vinegar can contend successfully with immoral influences. I cannot rest satisfied that the Eysell of the old ballad was not more than an equivalent for vinegar; I suspect it of a much more subtle meaning. In the Salisbury Primer (1555), the eighth prayer of the Fifteen O's begins thus:—'O Blessed Jesu! sweetness of heart and ghostly pleasure of souls, I beseech thee, for the bitterness of the Eysell and gall that thou tasted *and suffered* for me in thy passion, &c.,' which seems to imply more than is expressed by vinegar. No doubt we have interpreted the old 'Eysell' as vinegar, but that is not the

question. My feeling is that when the word was used to express the potion drunk by the Son of God on the cross, it signified far more than vinegar. I do not think Shakspeare could have chosen vinegar as the express juice of all bitterness, seeing that bitterness is not only not its dominant character; it is not even a characteristic; neither could it apply to a moral infection. Surely the lady would have looked to see if her lover were 'sniggering,' had he offered to swallow draughts of vinegar before he ventured to kiss her? And surely 'Eysell' was used because it had some moral signification? My query is whether 'Eysell' may not have been a word in the vulgar tongue, the exact meaning of which is now lost to the Etymologists? May not it have once signified tears, tears of sorrow, tears of repentance, tears of such preciousness and power, that the sight of the eye is as it were, bartered for bitterness, its life and strength sold to produce them; thus, in brief, 'Eysell' would be the life and 'precious seeing' of the eye sold in tears? And the lover would offer to drink potions of this, as the extract of all bitterness, a water of the most potent efficacy in washing a soul white, and cleansing it from moral impurity. Strange things were drunk, and strange offers made by the lovers of the time, in amorous bravado. But this lover was intensely in earnest, and the word is chosen for some transcendant worth. There was no bitterness to be expressed beyond it, and so he has to follow it with 'No bitterness that I will bitter think.' Now vinegar is altogether inadequate for the purpose, either in Shakspeare's or the popular imagination.

There is, I think, some slight authority for my conjecture in the sense our Poet has of the virtue of tears, and the way in which he speaks of drinking them.

In sonnet 34 the speaker says:—

> 'Ah! but those tears are pearl, which thy love sheds,
> And they are *rich* and *ransom* all ill deeds.'

Here is the equivalent of 'Eysell' as regards the preciousness of the tears, only translated more gaily. In the 'Venus and Adonis,' Venus asks Death, '*Dost thou drink tears*, that thou provokest such weeping?' In part iii. of King Henry VI. we have 'for every word I speak, ye see *I drink the water of mine eyes!*' And in sonnet 119

'What *potions* have I drunk of *siren* tears!'

Here the speaker *has* drunk potions of tears of the wrong sort. Moreover he pleads that in coming back to his Mistress, he has brought *water* for his *stain*. I doubt if 'Vinegar' can be traced etymologically to 'Eyesell.' On the other hand, 'Eh-scen,' or 'Eœh-sen,' is semi-Saxon for eye-sight. Also we have the *eye-water*, Euphrasy, to brighten and make clear. Why not the eye-water, 'Eysell,' or Eye-sell, which is so precious a thing morally when wept in bitterness of soul, as to be considered of incomparable virtue in cleansing, and potent against infection?

APPENDIX F.

SONNET 132, AND THE TAMING OF THE SHREW.

'And truly not the morning sun of heaven
Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,
Nor that full star that ushers in the even,
Doth half that glory to the sober west,
As those two mourning eyes become thy face!'
Sonnet 132.

'What stars do spangle heaven with such beauty,
As those two eyes become that heavenly face!'
Taming of the Shrew, Act iv. sc. 5.

At first sight it will appear from the above comparison that Shakspeare in this instance used the thought first in the drama, the 'Taming of the Shrew' being generally considered a somewhat early play. But so far as my insight into his working goes, and it can be corroborated by intrinsic evidence, I more than doubt whether he did reverse his usual practice even in this case. Unless with a very personal purpose, as in the description of Lady Rich's mourning eyes, it is positively the rule with him for the thought or expression to appear first in the sonnets. In the present instance, there is nothing sufficiently personal to account for any departure from his ordinary method. A question arises as to

whether this repetition may not throw a little light on the chronology of the play. The 'Taming of the Shrew' is not mentioned by Meres in his list of 1598, and if the work be studied afresh with the foregoing suggestion in mind, which is at least equal in authority to any traditional belief, I think it will be evident that the play is a much later production than the critics have supposed. It contains no signs of early workmanship. All through there is the most concentrated attention to business. The direct simplicity, the certainty of touch, the self-control, are quite worthy of Shakspeare's ripened art. The poetry has that smack of cordiality in the ring of certain words, hearty as the crack of Petruchio's whip, yet denoting the most mature nicety of choice. The humour is quick of touch and exquisite as his best. Moreover, the play has the mastery to achieve in verse the same result as the Poet's other comedy attains by prose. He has clothed farce sumptuously as he apparelled his own Christopher Sly. Never was farce so wealthily married to immortal verse. It seems to me that the character of Petruchio belongs to the same class of dramatic perceptions as that of Hamlet, inasmuch as both characters play an assumed part; and that the comedy of the one may have been the natural balance to the tragedy of the other—the other pennon, so to say, on which the Poet's mind moved at the time. It tends somewhat to the illustration of this view that Shakspeare should, in both comedy and tragedy, have made the same stage use of the 'players.' It is just possible that the Herbert sonnet above quoted may have been written in 1598. The younger the speaker was at the time, the more effective would be the jest on the subject of age in sonnet 138. Be this as it may, I hold that the Poet would certainly use the thought in the sonnet before applying it in the play.

APPENDIX G.

WILLIAM HERBERT AND SHAKSPEARE'S MINOR PIECES.

I SUSPECT we owe to Herbert much of the confusion that exists with regard to Shakspeare's minor pieces. In the first place our Poet could not have written some of the things ascribed to his pen. Nor could he have intended the four fragments on the one subject, 'Venus and Adonis'—if they are all his—to appear in print as we find them in the 'Passionate Pilgrim.' I think it must have been from Herbert that Jaggard obtained the two sonnets with other odds and ends of Shakspeare's writing, mixed up with some of Herbert's own, all of which Jaggard put forth as Shakspeare's.

So with the communications to 'England's Helicon.' I believe that Herbert supplied the Editor with the copy of Marlowe's 'Passionate Shepherd' and Shakspeare's reply, now composed in full, with a third poem on the same subject written by Himself! The signature of 'Ignoto' has simply no meaning whatever for us. If it had any when used, that is now identifiable, it must surely have indicated the Editor's ignorance of the authorship!

Pieces by a dozen different writers were subscribed 'Ignoto.' Therefore the reply to Marlowe's 'Passionate Shepherd' cannot be ascribed to Sir Walter Raleigh on the strength of that signature. Ellis gave the reply to Raleigh because in one of the copies of 'England's Helicon,' the intials W. R. were said to have been at first appended to the earliest complete copy of the verses. But Ellis distinctly referred to Steevens's copy which is now among Malone's books in the Bodleian (No. 278), and, as Mr. Hannah states, he must have been mistaken, for, in that copy the signature is simply 'Ignoto,' and has never been disturbed. So that Raleigh's claim to the poem rests on the authority of Walton, which is not of the slightest value. The old Angler's account is just the vaguest hearsay, as wide of the mark as was Lamb's random shot at the man whom he did not know, but damned at a venture! The first edition of Walton's book was published in 1653. In this the writer speaks of '*that smooth song which was made by Kit Marlowe now at least fifty years* ago!' A very safe assertion for *Marlowe had then been dead precisely sixty years!* But Isaac's familiarity with the facts was not equal to his familiarity with the Poet's name! He further states that the reply was written by Sir Walter Raleigh '*in his younger days.*' Now, as Raleigh was born in 1552 he was about half a century old at the time when, according to Walton, the 'Passionate Shepherd' was written! There needs no further proof that the '*Angler*' had no personal knowledge of the subject and is merely twaddling. The genuine clue to the unravelment of the case appears to be given in the 'Passionate Pilgrim,' where one stanza only of the 'reply' is printed. Tracing backward by such light as my reading of the sonnets throws on the subject, I should interpret the matter thus—Marlowe wrote his song for Southampton, to which Shakspeare appended at first four lines in reply. Southampton having given the

paper to Herbert, it appeared with other things in the 'Passionate Pilgrim.' Afterwards Shakspeare wrote his reply in full, Herbert composed a second reply, and all three pieces came into print together in 'England's Helicon.' Internal evidence stamps the first reply as Shakspeare's. As his I reprint it here—

'If all the world and love were young
And truth in every Shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee, and be thy Love.

'But Time drives flocks from field to fold,
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold:
And Philomel becometh dumb;
The rest complain of cares to come!

'The Flowers do fade, and wanton fields
To wayward Winter's reckoning yields:
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
Is fancy's Spring, but sorrow's Fall.

'Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies,
Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotton;
In folly ripe, in reason rotton!

'Thy belt of straw and ivy buds,
Thy coral clasps and amber studs—
All these in me no means can move
To come to thee and be thy Love.

'But could youth last and love still breed—
Had joy no date, had age no need;
Then those delights my mind might move
To live with thee and be thy Love.'

How like our practical Poet it is! and how Shakspearianly sensible are some of the expressions! 'In folly ripe, in reason rotton,' is a line we may swear by.

APPENDIX H.

THE SILENT LOVER.

THERE is a lyric generally known by this name; one of the loveliest among Elizabethan love-lyrics. Its authorship has been disputed. The latest editor of Raleigh's poems thinks Sir Walter's claim to it is 'supported by so many independent testimonies, that we need not hesitate to regard him as the author.' I beg leave to suggest a reconsideration of the subject; and submit one or two items that have been overlooked in the evidence. The poem is here printed with slight variations from the MS. copy in the Ashmole Museum.[1]

'Wrong not, dear Mistress of my heart,
The merits of true passion,
By thinking that he feels no smart
Who sues for no compassion:

'Though that my thoughts do not approve
The conquest of your beauty—
It comes not from defect of love,
But from excess of duty!

'For knowing that I sue to serve
A saint of such perfection,
As all desire, but none deserve
A place in her affection—

[1] *MSS.*, Ashmole, 781. p. 143.

'I rather choose to want relief,
Than venture the revealing;
Though glory recommends the grief,
Despair dissuades the healing:

'Thus the desires that aim so high
Of any mortal lover,
When reason cannot make them die,
Discretion doth them cover:

'Yet, when discretion doth bereave
The plaints that I should utter,
Then your discretion may perceive
That Silence is a suitor:

'Silence in love doth show more woe
Than words tho' ne'er so witty;
The Beggar that is dumb, you know,
May challenge double pity.'

The poem is wrought with great skill; it has the linked strength and graceful movement of a coat of chain-mail; the verses in this copy having no full stop until the lyric has reached its climax in that most *naïve* of all conceits in the last stanza. I do not think the mind of Raleigh moved thus lightly and naturally in verse. Such of his poetry as can be identified, is altogether wanting in the winsome grace of this song, and has no such quick spirit of fancy. His manner is more set and formal as though the dress of his thought were stiffly *brocaded*. The poem is ascribed to Raleigh in some of the old MS. collections in which his name has been so often misapplied. In one of the Rawl. MSS. the piece is entitled '*Sir Walter Raleigh to Queen Elizabeth*;' another instance, says the Rev. Mr. Hannah, where a right name is coupled with a wrong legend. I suspect the copyist may have been as right with the name, as with the legend, and no more. The copy in the MS. Ashm. is signed 'Lo. Walden;'

which is accepted as 'Lord Warden,' and assumed to mean Sir W. Raleigh as Lord Warden of the Stannaries. This signature is eqally favourable however, to the other claimant William, Earl of Pembroke, who was also Lord Warden of the Stannaries, under James. Next the poem is printed as Herbert's in the poems collected by the younger Donne. Here, to say the least, is quite as good authority as any on which the poem is ascribed to Raleigh.

It is almost the sole piece in the collection dedicated by that editor to the Countess of Devonshire, to which his words apply. 'Whatever was *excellently said* to any lady in all these poems was meant for you.' Lastly, the germ idea belongs to Shakspeare—he who wrote the tenderest things touching silence in love. In Sonnet 26 the Poet pleads—

> 'O, let my books be then the eloquence
> And dumb presagers of my speaking breast;
> Who plead for love and look for recompence,
> More than that tongue that more hath more expressed!
> O learn to read what silent love hath writ:
> To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.'

Again, in Sonnet 85 he says—

> 'Then others for the breath of words respect;
> Me, for my dumb thoughts speaking in effect.'

Now, if there be any value in the authority which assigns the poem to Raleigh, as one addressed by him to the Queen, it goes to prove that the poem was written during the life of her Majesty, or else the subject could not have been given. And I think that whoever wrote the 'Silent Lover' must have been acquainted with Shakspeare's Sonnets so that if it was written before the Queen's death, the acquaintanceship must have been with the Sonnets in *MS.* Thus there would be three points in favour of Herbert

—the borrowing of the thought from the Sonnets, which the Earl held in *MS.*—the signature of 'Lord Warden,' in the Ashmole *MS.* copy—and the fact of its appearance in Herbert's collected poems. When we add to this the internal evidence which is strong against Raleigh's claim, I think the poem may be, with the greater probability, assigned to Herbert. For, not only is Shakspeare's idea the root of it, but I suspect the great Poet retouched it for his young friend, and finished it with that last stanza which is the 'captain jewel in the carcanet,' and has the flash of our Poet's mind; a thought that he set in many lights. In 'Much Ado about Nothing' we find 'silence is the perfectest herald of joy.' In 'Troilus and Cressida,' 'See your silence, cunning in dumbness!'

Mr. Hannah prints these additional lines:

> 'Passions *are likened best* to floods and streams;
> The shallow murmur, but the deep are dumb:
> So when *affections yield discourse, it seems*
> The bottom is but shallow whence they come.
> They that are rich in words, in words discover
> *That* they are poor *in that* which makes a Lover'—

and seems to think the copy in Herbert's poems imperfect, because the above lines are wanting. As one accustomed to write lyrics, I should say that the man who wrote the 'Silent Lover,' an essential lyric, could by no means have added the above lines. They are a tawdry bit of second-hand trash that has been tagged on! Any *MSS.* which included them could have no original authority. I should judge that the Ashmole copy contains the original poem, and that the one in 'Herbert's Poems' was retouched from it. For illustration, the word '*utter*' occurs twice in the first-named copy, and it has been taken out of the 4th stanza of the later version and the word 'venture' substituted, because 'utter' was used in a rhyme of stanza 6. Also, in 'Herbert's Poems' the first stanza has been repeated for a refrain at the end.

APPENDIX I.

KING JOHN.

> 'We will not line his thin bestainéd cloak
> With our pure honors.'
>
> Act. iv. sc. 3.

THE present reading of the sonnets will shed many little glancing lights on the plays. It will open up a richer vein of commentary which I have not been able to work fully for want of space. I believe, for example, that sonnet 67 illustrates the above quotation and comparatively proves 'thin bestained cloak' to be the wrong reading.

> 'Ah wherefore with infection should he live,
> And with his presence grace impiety,
> That sin by him advantage should achieve,
> And lace itself with his society?'

Here sin lacing or decorating itself assuredly suggests that the cloak to be, or not to be, lined 'with our pure honors' was *sin*-bestained, not thin bestained. The cloak might require new lining, either because it was very thin, or much soiled, but Shakspeare would hardly have put forth such a double reason for a single lining. Lastly, '*our pure* honours' necessarily implies '*his sin* bestained cloak.'

MACBETH.

'I have no spur
To prick the *sides* of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls o' the other.'

Act i. sc. 7.

As the text stands above we have in shadowy imagery a most extraordinary horse and rider. Macbeth was no more likely to wear a single spur that *would* strike on *both* sides than the Irishman was to discover the much-coveted gun that would shoot round a corner. Moreover his horse must have had three sides to it at the least. Now, a horse may have four sides, right and left, inside and outside, and the street *gamins* will at times advise an awkward horseman to ride inside for safety, but it cannot have three sides. And if the single spur had pricked *two sides* there could have been no *other* left for 'vaulting ambition' to fall on. The truth is that '*sides*' is a misprint. The single spur of course implies a single *side*—the side of Macbeth's intent, which leaves '*the other*' for the 'vaulting ambition' to alight on in case of a somersault—the side of Macbeth's *unintent*. The passage comes perfectly right if we read—

'I have no spur
To prick *the side* of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls *o' the other*.'

MACBETH.

'What *beast* was 't then,
That made you break this enterprise to me?'
Act i. sc. 7.

That '*beast*' and not '*boast*' is the genuine lection here may be illustrated comparatively, by referring to 'King Richard II.,' act iii. scene 4, where the Queen asks the reflective Gardener—

'What Eve, what Serpent hath suggested thee?'

The Serpent was sliding through the mind of Lady Macbeth just before, when she bade her husband to

'look like the innocent flower
But *be* the *serpent* under 't'—

and no doubt she afterwards alludes to the Serpent as the beast of the field and the tempter that beguiled Eve; 'What beast, what serpent was it that tempted you?'

CYMBELINE.

'some jay of Italy,
Whose mother was her painting.'
Act iii. sc. 4.

Here is one of those instantaneous Shakspearian flashes which *smelt* the meaning of many words into one with a lightning-like power. It is the strip of colour on the wing of the jay that causes that bird to be commonly called the painted jay; this creates its popular character. And the woman here spoken of is a jay 'whose mother was her painting' because her beauty was a false creation; her painting made her, or mothered her, or was her Mother. Her *maker* is the sense of the passage, but 'mother' was the nearest word that could be consistently used.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

'Spread thy close curtain love-performing night,
That Runaway's eyes may wink and Romeo
Leap to these arms untalked-of and unseen.'
Act iii. sc. 2.

I do not understand why there should have been such an absurd dance of the Commentators after the '*runnawayes*' of the old editions, or such a wild-goose chase in search of unnecessary substitutes, like 'Rumour's' 'Rumourer's,' 'Renomy's' 'unawares,' 'enemies' eyes,' &c. To my thinking the old reading, with Juliet as Runaway, is a most golden one; subtly Shakspearian; the passage poetically playfully perfect. Juliet *is* the Runaway! She has run away from the parental authority and from her duty as a daughter. She has run away from the arms of father and mother to the bosom of her lover. She has run away to be secretly married, and is now waiting to run into the embrace of her husband. No word could be more characteristic than this, when applied by Juliet to herself. Mr. Dyce has printed 'rude day's eyes,' which may easily be shown to be an impossible reading. Juliet would not wish the eyes of day to *wink* if she wanted them to close altogether. Besides, the closing of day's eyes would, of course, be included in the coming of night, and it is not Shakspeare's habit to state that which is already implied. This rejection of Juliet as 'Runaway' and the vulgar public appeal to the day, &c. show that the Critics have totally misapprehended the whole speech and grossly misinterpreted the character of the speaker. They have assumed that the sole incentive of this appeal for night to come was Juliet's eagerness for the perfecting of her marriage. It is not so. That would make of Juliet a forward wanton, and of her speech an invocation most immodest, whereas her appeal to Night is for protection, for its darkness to drop a veil that will, as it were, hide her from her-

self. She is naturally desirous for Romeo's coming, but her great anxiety for the night's coming is the sensitiveness of modesty. The appeal is for Night to *curtain round* the bridal bed—for the Night to *teach her how* to lose a winning match—for the night to '*hood* her unmanned blood' as the eyes of the falcon are covered up. This is the governing thought of the speech, therefore it was of the first dramatic necessity that an early cue should be given. And so, after the first passionate outburst the Poet makes Juliet wish the night to come *that* her eyes may '*wink*;' *i.e.* may be bashfully veiled in the shadow of the darkness so that she can modestly countenance her husband's coming. The Critics would deprive the speech of its mood indicative, the character of a suggestion which was meant to guard it; a thought that acts like a bridal veil—a touch that gives to the invocation the tint of virgin crimson without which the speech would be positively barefaced. They have been looking too outwardly; dwelling too much on the assumed context of night and day, and have missed the dramatic motive and the more precious personal context. Juliet was not looking quite so much abroad as they have been; her thought was more inward and had a more private appropriateness; her feeling is altogether more maidenly than has been supposed. Other reasons and illustrations might be adduced to show that the old editions have given us Shakspeare's meaning, which cannot be mended. After what the Nurse tells us of her young Lady's pleasant conceit in coupling the names of 'Rosemary' and 'Romeo,' it is very characteristic for Juliet to match the names of Runaway and Romeo in loving alliteration. Also the coupling of her name in some shape or other with 'Romeo' in the lines quoted is of infinitely the greater necessity. She wants the night to fold in the pair of lovers, and would not leave herself out. The '*and* Romeo' is of itself sufficient to tell us that Runaway must be Juliet. Lastly, to come to that surface comparison be-

yond which the Critics have so seldom gone for illustration, the thought in the Poet's mind respecting maiden modesty *winking* at marriage may be proved conclusively by reference to the play of Henry V. :—

'*Burgundy.* Can you blame her then, being a maid yet rosed over with the virgin crimson of modesty, if she deny the appearance of a naked blind boy.

'*King Henry.* *Yet they do wink and yield,—as love is blind and enforces.* . . . . Good my lord, teach your cousin to *consent winking.*'

Act v. sc. 2.

Here is a sufficient exemplification of Shakspeare's meaning in making the appeal for Night to come *that* Juliet's (the naughty Runaway's) eyes may *wink* under the cover of its darkness as well as Romeo's visit be perfectly secret. The Commentators had no warrant whatever for suspecting the old reading, and have shown an utter lack of insight in their attempts to alter it, which have been quite destructive of the dramatic intention and injurious to the character of Juliet.

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